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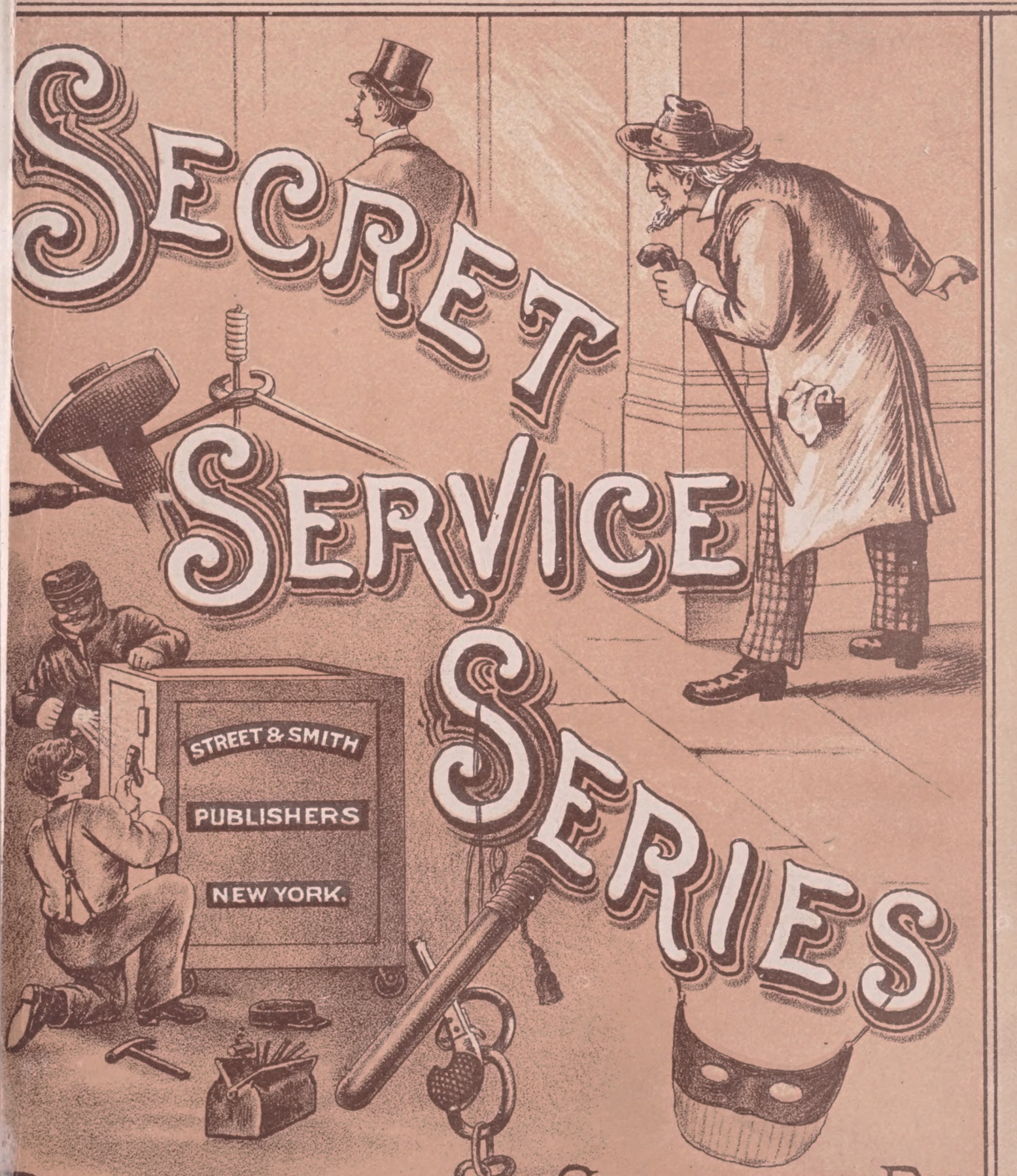
HE VESTIBULE LIMITED MYSTERY.

By ALEXANDER ROBERTSON, M. D. No. 39.



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The Vestibule Limited Mystery.

BY

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON, M. D..

Author of "THE IRISH MONTE CRISTO'S TRAIL," "THE IRISH MONTE CRISTO ABROAD," "THE IRISH MONTE CRISTO'S SEARCH," "OLD SPECIE," etc., etc., etc.

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THE VESTIBULE LIMITED MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

OFF FOR CHICAGO ON THE LIMITED.

A loud knock upon the door of my bachelor apartment arouses me from a sound slumber, and opening my eyes I see by the little cricket clock on the mantel that the hour lacks but a few minutes of eight. Having been out on some important business during the better part of the past night, and with a smaller measure of success than I might wish, I am not in the best of humor upon finding my rest disturbed; but business is business, and I have learned long ago how to make the most of a bad bargain.

The rap sounds again, this time accompanied by the sharp, rasping voice of my landlady—which I am sure would arouse the Seven Sleepers.

"Mr. Craig! Are you dead or alive in there?"

"What's all this row about, Susan?" I grumble, digging my knuckles into my eyes, the better to disperse the cohorts of the drowsy god.

"A note from the office for you, sir."

"Ah! who brought it?" arousing myself, well knowing that this meant business.

"Jackson, sir—he said as how it was very important, and I must get you up at once."

"Confound Jackson," I mutter, yawning, and then call out aloud, "slip it under the door, there's a good woman, and have me a cup of coffee and an egg in five minutes, please. There's no telling when I may get anything to eat if the colonel has any special business ahead."

"All right, sir. Hurry down," calls the good old soul, and I hear her shuffling to the lower regions of the small house, at imminent risk to life and limb.

The note that has been thrust under the door is speedily in my hands and opened.

"Come to the office immediately. A big case demands attention. Minutes precious. A."

It is just like the colonel—brief and to the point, yet containing a promise of great things. The legions of sleep have been thoroughly routed, and I am wide awake now. With a rapidity acquired by long practice, I don my garments, dash some water into my face, and the stipulated five minutes have hardly passed ere I descend the stairs.

Susan can be relied on every time, and I find my eggs and coffee ready. Making a quick breakfast, I leave the house.

The office being only a few blocks away, I find myself in the presence of my employer, Colonel Acton, at just twenty minutes after eight. He smiles upon seeing me, and rubs his hands in a way peculiar to himself when pleased.

"Mr. Craig, how long will it take you to prepare for a journey?" he asks,

"That depends where my destination is—if California or Europe, less than half an hour, but if you want me to travel to the other world, I should want forty odd years to get ready in."

"The half-hour will do in this case, Craig. I have already telegraphed to secure you a berth in the Chicago Limited Vestibule express which leaves at 10 A. M."

"Then Chicago is my goal, colonel?" I ask.

"That depends pretty much on circumstances and yourself, Mr. Craig. It may be but one of your stopping-places on a trip around the world," he replies, with a smile, at which I shrug my shoulders unconcernedly.

"I have gone globe-trotting with only a valise at my side before now, and I suppose I could do it again. Will you give me the directions?"

He hands me an envelope.

"You will find them written out in that. Here is a roll of bills for current expenses. Keep a strict account of expenditures, and if you need more draw on me. This case is of the greatest importance, and if success can be obtained, it will be a big amount in your pocket, I give you my word, Mr. Craig."

"Good. That is what I like. It is worth while devoting one's whole energies to the business. How about that Livingston affair, sir?"

"That is still open, I believe?"

"I am sorry to say it is, colonel."

He looks at me reflectively for a moment, smoothing his chin meanwhile, with a measured movement, as though this action has something to do with stirring up his thought.

"I was tempted to go on this case myself, Mr.

Craig, but decided to hand it over to you. Let all other matters be subservient to the one in hand. Wire me if anything unusual turns up, and do your level best for success."

The clock strikes the half-hour, and I rise.

"I will lose no time in getting away, then. What name have you given them in reserving a seat in the sleeper?"

"Your old favorite—Hezekiah Broadbrim."

"Thanks. That suits me to a dot."

Then I shake hands with the colonel, who wishes me all manner of luck, and presently I am hurrying along back to my den again, to make ready for the trip. This is not an unusual event in my life. I am prepared to sail for Europe on half an hour's notice, and on one occasion started on a voyage that took me around the world, with only fifty minutes warning.

I am glad the colonel desires me to assume the disguise of a Quaker, for it is really my best character, and I never fear discovery while carrying out that role. Everything is at hand, and I am an adept at the work, so that before nine o'clock Duncan Craig has entirely lost his identity, and Hezekiah Broadbrim comes upon the scene, in sober drab garments of a peculiar cut, a wide-brimmed hat of the well-known build, and a pious face that seems to be continually shocked over the universal depravity of a sinful world, as seen through a pair of plain glass spectacles.

My valise contains a number of things that I imagine may turn out useful upon such an excursion. When I pick it up, bid my good landlady farewell, and sally forth, it is just twenty minutes

after nine, with plenty of time to reach the ferry-house long before the hour set for starting.

A dozen times I am beset by boys who desire to carry my valise, and in despair I finally hand it over to one fellow, with orders to stick at my side.

Just as I expected, crossing Broadway I am met by a bunco man with outstretched hand, and a smile that is child-like and bland.

"Well, well, can this be my old friend, Josiah Bland, of Philadelphia?" he asks.

I seize his hand and give it a squeeze that almost dislocates the small bones, and causes a look of intense agony to spread over his face.

"Yea, verily, that is my name, and the City of Brotherly Love my habitation. Thee is Mr. Larkin, the bank president's son or nephew, I forget which; but I have been looking for thee some time now. What a boon it is to have a friend in such a wicked city. I say, Joe, lend me ten, that's a good fellow!"

The man's eyes almost bulge from their sockets with surprise.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculates, giving me a look of amazed wonder, and then without even an apology for his rudeness, the renowned bunco steerer, Hungry Joe, makes a bee-line for the Astor House, as though he has suddenly remembered a very important engagement there.

I chuckle over his disaster and continue on my way. Evidently victims are scarce on this occasion, for hardly have I reached Cortlandt street, to turn toward the North River, than another rascal stops me.

This time he is in appearance a missionary, with a long, sanctimonious face, and the garb of piety. He meets me with open arms—his whole warm

heart is in his face—he looks as though he would like to embrace me, but I meet his eye, and hold him enthralled by the power of my gaze, while I ejaculate:

"Scat! you disreputable villain!"

It takes all the ambition out of him, just as a hot day wilts the stiffest standing collar.

He gives me one look of horror that causes me much amusement to remember, murmurs something about a dreadful mistake, and not being able to see well without his glasses, after which he scuttles up Church street in a way that suggests a sudden fear of arrest.

I have never known the rascals to be so thick; but my disguise is good, and proves irresistible to the average bunco man. They are generally cunning chaps, too, and capable of seeing any make-up in their intended prey.

This time I am allowed to reach the ferry in peace, but a fellow follows me, as if he scented game. I recognize him and give the officer at the crossing a few words of warning, so that when the chap comes along he orders him away gruffly.

Once inside the ferry-house I take my satchel from the boy, and discharge him.

It is just twenty minutes of ten, so I have plenty of time to spare. I buy some fruit to eat on the journey, and cross over the river on the first boat. The day is a fair one and gives promise of making a pleasant affair of the trip; but it matters little what the weather is to one snugly ensconced in the Vestibule Limited express—save for the danger of delays from washouts, should the rain be very heavy.

I never miss an opportunity to study those around

me, and mentally decide what manner of persons they are, whither bound, and upon what sort of mission.

Long experience, and a capacity for reading the human countenance, renders one pretty expert at this sort of business—in fact, I am able to hit the mark under ordinary circumstances two times out of three.

It is a species of amusement that grows upon one, especially if traveling daily upon some of the great ferry-boats near New York, or using the elevated roads frequently.

Many a dull hour have I passed away in this manner, and profitably, too, for it keeps your wits sharpened, and increases your fund of knowledge concerning the odd fancies of your fellow-men.

There are some strange characters upon the Pennsylvania ferry-boat on this morning in question, and I manage to amuse myself in studying them as we speed toward the Jersey side of the noble Hudson. No doubt I myself am set down in the same category by the ordinary every-day passengers, but Quakers are seen too often to cause much comment, especially on a Philadelphia line.

I proceed to the ticket-office as soon as we land, and find that a seat and berth have been kept for one Hezekiah Broadbrim, for Chicago.

Having secured my ticket, berth check and extra fare ticket, I am ready to board the train. Very naturally the strange business about to engross my attention, though as yet unknown to me, possesses a great attraction. I am anxious to learn what it may prove to be.

All must come in good time—when I am comfortably settled in my seat, and rolling out of the city,

it will be in order for me to take hold of the letter of instructions handed me by Colonel Acton, and ascertain just what sort of game I am to play on the Limited Vestibule express, ere reaching Chicago.

One or two of the passengers are already seated in the Pullman sleeping-car to which I am assigned by reason of my check. As many more have come over on the same boat with myself and the others will arrive on the next one.

I settle myself comfortably and prepare to study my fellow-travelers. They promise to give me much pleasure in the analysis, too, being an uncommon lot of people.

The last boat enters the slip, there is a rush of people—our car receives its last additions, and the starting time comes—all full but one berth.

CHAPTER II.

MY FELLOW-PASSENGERS.

A bell clangs.

"All aboard!" calls an official outside.

Hurried adieus are said, and those not going, leave the train. A signal is given, and we begin to move, passing through the streets of Jersey City, and heading for the cut in the Bergen hills.

In a very brief time the Limited is making good time over the meadows beyond the Hackensack River. The passengers in our car have by this time managed to get seated in their respective places, and presently the conductor will be going his rounds to see that each has the proper seat called for by check.

It is time for me to open Acton's letter of instructions, and find out what I am to do. So I spread it before me in such a way that no other eyes can catch a word.

He has written it hurriedly, probably in the time which elapsed between sending Jackson to call me, and my appearance at the office; but I am used to his ways, and can generally supply anything that is missing.

Verbatim, my letter of instructions reads:

"In the same car with you, I believe, at any rate on the Limited Vestibule express, you will discover several parties whom you are to watch closely. I will describe them. One seems to be a man of forty-five; a handsome, dashing fellow, with an eye

that few ladies can resist; he has a gray mustache and small side-whiskers. This man is Colonel Larz Andrews.

"Accompanying him is a woman who persists in keeping her face vailed, and yet, if you chance to get a glimpse of her countenance, you will find it strikingly beautiful.

"Watch this couple—discover all you can about them, for the secret of your journey is wrapped up in their movements. There is a third party near by—keep your eye out for him. I do not know in what character he will appear, but you will discover him through his anxiety about this pair—he is apt to watch them like a hawk.

"Now to explain the matter as well as it can be done just at present. This man is on a big lay; he is planning to get hold of a million at least. The woman is his confederate, and is known in England as the most successful confidence woman of the day, although hardly more than a girl in years. Her real name is Ann Reilly, but she long ago discarded that, and uses one more fancy. I don't know what it will be this time.

"Watch this couple. Before long you will get on to their dodge. They travel as father and daughter, he a retired English officer. The game will begin under your eyes; when you see what they are up to you will comprehend what you are to do. If you are puzzled, wire me while *en route*, and I will answer at Harrisburgh, Altoona, or Pittsburgh; but I trust the game to your good judgment."

That is all.

I turn the paper over and look at the back, but not another scrap of writing meets my eyes. Really, this surprises me. It is not like the colonel to give such vague instructions. I am all in a fog with regard to what I have to do, and must trust to my good sense, just as if by accident I had discovered that this couple must be playing some game which curiosity prompts me to investigate.

Why has not my employer given me fuller particulars? It would have been easy for him to have stated in so many words what the strange game of these confidence people might be, and have saved me some guessing. Does he intend to give me an opportunity to indulge in my favorite study? The colonel knows me well, and can depend upon Duncan Craig every time, but that does not wholly explain his omission—perhaps it was unintentional; he may have meant to tell me all, and I have a half idea I will get a telegram ahead in our regular cipher.

If not, then he means that I am to be thrown on my own resources. This may tickle my professional vanity but it makes my task all the harder, and I do not thank my employer.

As I replace the note in my pocket, I glance around the Pullman in search of the couple thus described. Jove! they are just opposite my seat, as luck will have it. Without appearing to take any particular notice of them, I rapidly scan both parties.

The man is indeed a dashing-looking fellow, though his face, to my keen observation, shows slight signs of dissipation. I realize at once that this fellow is a shrewd schemer, and when playing for a million, as the colonel has expressed it, he will be a hard one to beat.

As for his companion, I am unable to determine her character, for she keeps her face vailed. So scrupulously does she stick to this that the other passengers must believe she is either very ugly, or else following out the requirements of a vow. I know the truth will prove both suppositions wrong.

Her figure is a charming one, and I can well im-

agine that if her face matches it, the girl must be a charmer indeed.

She will raise that plagued vail after a while, and give me a chance to see her face. Meanwhile I observe the young man with whom she converses.

He is good-looking, intellectual, and has the appearance of a man accustomed to wealth. I have seen him somewhere, that I am sure of as soon as my eyes fall on his face, and I set my brains to work, endeavoring to remember just where, as Colonel Acton has not seen fit to mention even his name.

One thing is evident—this man is head over ears in love with the vailed woman. I can see that with one eye closed, for his actions declare him insnared by her spell.

I fall to moralizing, and remember how the strongest men I have known, able to resist all ordinary temptations, have fallen at length in the snare set by some siren. It seems that man's best friend and worst enemy in this strange world of ours is—woman.

Then I smile complacently as I reflect that I have been above the common run, since I have reached the age of forty and never compromised myself as yet in a love scrape. No matter how lovely the face might be, Duncan Craig has been able to sneer at the fancy, and devote himself strictly to business. I would not have the reader believe me an ogre—I know lots of happy benedicts and envy them their lot, but have long since made up my mind that fate never intended me for such a state.

Perhaps my time may yet come, I admit, while sitting there watching the couple opposite by means of the small mirror between the windows in my

section—who knows? Forty is an age of reason to be sure, but they tell me reason is no match for Cupid, and I am fain to believe it, judging from the many odd things I have witnessed in times past.

Suddenly, I remember that as yet I have made no effort to discover the other party who is supposed to be watching these people. I glance around the car to see if I can pick him out immediately, but, passing from one traveler to another, I fail to do so.

I recognize a well-known manager and dramatic writer, whose plays have been a great success. In his company is an actor, also well known as a delineator of peculiar people. They occupy section one.

Then I see a commercial traveler—how easy it is to distinugish him from the common herd. He looks as though he owns the earth. I afterward learn that he is a New York business man, bound to Chicago, perhaps to attend some important meeting. Opposite him is a woman attired as a nun. She sits there almost motionless, and no doubt engrossed with serious thoughts.

Farther on are the trio I am watching, the young man having a seat *vis-a-vis* with myself, when in it. As I turn and pass down the aisle to get a drink of water, while the train shoots through Newark, I take in the balance of my fellow-passengers.

Just back of me, in six, are two ladies and a gentleman, whom I set down as belonging to the upper ten of Chicago. Scraps of their talk having already reached my ears gives me this impression even before I see them.

Then in section five, across from them are a number of valises, the owners of which are either in the

smoking compartment or else visiting some friend in one of the other sleepers.

This leaves two sections.

Number seven is occupied by a queer old gent whom I take to be a musician, for he has a violin done up in a case, and handles it now and then as carefully as though it were a baby. There is something about his eyes that tells me I have seen him before. I know Ovid Musin and several other fine violinists, but cannot place this singular old gent with the long white locks. However, I mark him down as the Professor. Opposite to him sits a man whose dress is rather loud. I know he is the owner of fast horses, and perhaps a race-track gambler. At any rate he travels in style, and throws his money around recklessly.

In the last section, I find a quiet-looking woman, who seems to be of foreign blood. I mark her down as some one's attendant—a sort of companion, but for the life of me fail to discover how this can be, as the other seat of the section is occupied by a Jewish gentleman who looks as though he might be a Rabbi.

Passing beyond the drawing-room and smokers' compartment, I get a drink of ice-water. A couple of gentlemen are smoking, and I take it they belong to the valises, or the latter do to them—in section five.

Having thus made my inventory of the car, I am puzzled to decide who it is my employer declares is watching the trio opposite my seat. This can only be found out by careful scrutiny, and I will have plenty of time to look into the matter as the train speeds onward. As yet, the only one I suspicion is

the old Professor, and I mean to keep an eye on him.

Here is a strange game being played, and I must puzzle out the truth. What do these two confidence people mean to do with the rich young man? I remember him now as Robert Hammond, of New York, as bright a figure in politics and society as the metropolis can boast, and I am doubly astonished to see him in the toils.

The two gentlemen in the smoking compartment are Englishmen, who have come out for sport, and seem to be on their way to the North-west with that purpose in view.

Business necessitated their being in New York and Chicago, which accounts for their taking this route in preference to the Canadian Pacific.

I hear them telling this to the Pullman car conductor who sits with them.

Again I pass to my seat to pick up more information concerning the strange game. I remember Colonel Acton declaring that it rests entirely with me whether the matter is finished at Chicago, or the journey indefinitely prolonged; and I am sure that unless I diligently set to work it will be another globe-trotting tour.

I cannot hear what those across from me are saying, but the young man seems to be begging a favor. The girl glances around through her vail; my head is turned aside, but I can see by means of the mirror.

She raises her vail a minute and gives her victim a ravishing smile that leaves him colorless with emotion. I can hardly blame the poor devil for making a fool of himself—that face is the most wonderful I have ever laid eyes on.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE TOILS OF THE SIREN.

The vail falls again, and I draw a long breath. If Larz Andrews plays such trump cards as this beauty, I do not wonder at his success. Robert Hammond is her slave—he will follow her almost to death. I see him endeavor to touch her hand now and then; she plays her part to perfection, and excites his passion in a dozen little ways known to her sex.

The pretended father is deeply interested in a novel, and pays no attention to the young couple. He knows he can trust the girl to do what he wishes.

By the merest chance in the world I look in the mirror at the end of the car, which reflects everything back of me. The quiet, dark-faced woman whom I have set down as some one's companion, has partly risen from her seat. I see her make a few rapid movements with her hands, not unlike the letters of the deaf and dumb alphabet, and wondering to whom she can be signaling, cast my eyes down the aisle until they rest upon—the nun.

Ah! I understand now. Whether the person wearing that sober garb is a genuine nun or not, she is evidently the party my employer meant when he said I would discover some one else watching the game.

It grows more interesting.

I endeavor to make up my mind whether this nun's garb may not be assumed for the occasion. Who is the woman wearing it? What connection does she bear toward the adventuress? She has a maid with her; this fact does much to make her out a counterfeit in my mind.

Perhaps it is Hammond she spies upon—she may be some cast-off love of his, seeking revenge; or a sister, devoted to his interests, and desirous of saving him from the doom to which the rich young man is drifting.

That I must find out as time passes.

Then, I go over the list of passengers once more, and find my interest resting on the quaint Professor again. He is watching these people too; well, that is not so odd, if I can believe he has had a glimpse of the girl's face, which may be the case.

The steady motion of the fast train makes traveling a pleasure, and not a stop will be effected until we draw into Philadelphia, after a run of some ninety miles.

Will my employer wire me there? he may have realized how indefinite his instructions must have been, and concluded to let me deeper into the matter. Already I have reached what is probably the real truth—that some one has hired him to save Robert Hammond from his fate.

When a man is dead set upon such a thing—head over ears in love, dazed, enslaved, charmed by such an adorable creature as the girl with whom he is seated, it must prove a Herculean task to save him against his will. I do not shrink from it, but at the same time understand full well the difficulties in the way.

Ah! a thought flashes into my mind; at first I

have supposed it is the young man's father who is back of my employer, but the idea occurs to me that this same woman dressed as a nun may have something to do with the matter.

Acton has told me there is a million at stake, and if such is the case, these confidence people will naturally exert themselves as never before—it will be the supreme effort of their lives.

As the victim is blinded and dazzled by the glamour that is upon him, he may naturally be expected to side with his enemies, unless his eyes are opened by some astonishing process, so that he may see the truth exactly as it appears.

Philadelphia is reached after twelve o'clock.

The one seat vacant in our car, opposite the two English sportsmen, is occupied here by a thin-faced woman with corkscrew curls, whom I take to be an old maid. A glance at her traveling satchel reveals the fact that she is the principal of a young ladies' academy out in Illinois. I consider her my beau ideal of a school marm—prim, sagacious, and stern.

Again the Vestibule Limited starts out, now to head for Harrisburgh upon the Susquehanna, and through the gates of the river into the heart of the Alleghenies.

Young Hammond comes over to his seat and opens his satchel to get something out. I notice that he seems very unlike a man in his proper senses, and wonder whether these plotters have drugged him in any way. It may be only the staggering effects of his fascination that I witness; but I never saw a plainer case of the enchantment of a Circe than this. I reflect with rather grim satisfaction, that there has been a day in New England when they tied a witch to the stake for just such

sorcery as this. Probably much wickedness was done under the name of witchcraft in those days, and I have no doubt that if innocent parties suffered, the guilty were occasionally brought up with a round turn.

What is it he takes from his satchel? I am deeply interested in my paper, but through a hole in its center I see the object he lays on the seat temporarily while closing his valise.

It looks like a box from a jeweler's, and I manage to glance in the direction of the fair adventuress when he hands it to her.

Almost immediately she utters a decidedly feminine ejaculation of delight, and I almost hold my breath as I see the diamonds in her hand, for they are royally magnificent.

At her exclamation, the handsome retired English officer tears his attention from the novel he is reading, and surveys the sparkling gems with an interest he tries in vain to subdue.

I am not an expert in such matters, but I know something about diamonds, and feel quite confident the gems Robert Hammond thus nonchalantly presents to the girl he is so madly infatuated with, on the Limited Chicago express, must be worth a couple of thousand dollars at least.

Given time, the young man will probably spend his whole fortune on the beautiful adventuress. There is no limit to a man's course when under such a spell—the wisest may become a fool—even Samson of old found his Delilah.

Once more the doughty colonel of hussars resumes his novel, hiding himself behind its pages, but I can see him smile in a peculiar fashion, thanks to the

friendly little mirror near at hand, and understand that his thoughts are pleasant ones.

How far will they go in this game—it is a question of great moment to me. I do not believe the young man's life is in danger, but such people as these hesitate at nothing when the end is worth the effort.

Dinner is announced in the dining-car, and a portion start for the seat of war. I linger, not for want of an appetite, but because there are two good reasons. In the first place, the car will be filled at first and no room for me. Then again, I prefer to dine at the same time the strange trio opposite do. Why? Well, perhaps it may be the better to watch them, and, yes, the desire to see that wonderful face which has smitten poor Robert Hammond in such a deadly manner, possibly has something to do with it.

At any rate, I wait half an hour. Then those who went first, return, and noticing the dashing colonel putting his novel away, while the lady goes to wash her hands, I conclude they intend going in to dinner, and at once make a break for the dining-car myself.

Here I have a chance to get a seat at the entrance, where the balance of the car is spread out before me. When the party enters, I will have a good opportunity to watch them.

They come.

The lady sits facing me, and throws back the short vail which has almost completely hidden her face. As before, I am dazzled. It is not her beauty alone that strikes me so powerfully, but a something beyond the power of words to describe.

I realize that such a wonderfully fascinating

creature could play the confidence game to an almost unlimited extent. Nearly any man would be bamboozled by the specious tale she would tell, and have his hand in his pocket unconsciously, ere she was half done. As to appearing against her in court, hang me if a jury could be found who would look upon that face and convict her of such a trifling thing as getting money on false pretenses.

I hardly know what I eat for my dinner, and yet when done, I am conscious of my satiety. My attention has been wholly given up to admiring that remarkable face, and wondering why Providence gave it to the possessor of an unscrupulous mind.

There are queerly constructed creatures in this world of ours, who look as though some mistake had been made in the combination of mind and matter. One woman, brought prominently before the New York public not a great while since, in the notorious case of blackmail, is as beautiful as an houri, and has the look of a gentle, refined lady, yet she has seldom been heard to speak without uttering an oath. Surely the chemist who put the properties together, must have made a grave mistake, and somewhere in this world walks a woman with the features of a fiend, and a disposition angelic in its character.

At length I leave the car and return through a couple of sleepers to the one where I belong. As I enter, I see the nun leave the seat where the sallow-faced woman sits. The latter is busy tying up a cardboard box which evidently contains luncheon, which they have probably been enjoying together, taking advantage of the absence of the other party.

Presently, the three come in. I am, at the time,

washing my hands, and they pass close by, the lady laughing at some sally made by Hammond.

"Yes, a remarkable coincidence, as you say Albert. I never thought there was another creature in the world so like that girl," I hear a voice say, and notice the fact that the English tourist sportsmen are in the smoking compartment, and have seen the trio pass.

It strikes me the speaker refers to the lovely siren who leads Robert Hammond about, and I strain my ears to hear more.

His companion puffs complacently at his sweet brier pipe for a minute before speaking.

"Well you see, Reggie, old fellow, I was bitten by Ann Reilly, under the name of Isabelle Dunraven, to the tune of fifty pounds, and I have reason to remember her. This girl is her exact counterpart, and d'ye know I'm very much of the opinion it's the same party, and that she's up to some beastly game with the rich young chap she's leading by the nose."

"If you were sure of it, I'd warn the poor fool."

"Nonsense! Catch me telling him the girl he's dead gone on is an adventuress. Why, if I'm any judge of the Yankee, he's fiery enough to call it a lie, and knock some of my teeth out. Oh! no, it's none of my business. Let him cut his eye teeth and learn wisdom."

Then they fall to talking about something that concerns their trip in the North-west. I have a faint inclination to tell them the supposition advanced is the truth, but on second thought, restrain myself. The fewer concerned in that secret the better.

I return to the main body of the car to resume my seat, and once more endeavor to gather the

threads together so as to weave them into a beautiful fabric—my case.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRANGE OLD VIOLINIST.

Robert Hammond and the girl seem to be wholly wrapped up in each other, and pay little attention to their fellow-travelers. The doughty colonel has left them, to smoke in the gentlemen's compartment. I wonder will he enter into conversation with the English tourists, and whether they may or may not size him up for a fraud of the first water. Still, he may have been an officer in her majesty's service—all such officers are not gentlemen of the first rank, since an examination allows a man to enter the line.

The young couple apparently find plenty to talk about. As the car is warm the girl is forced to remove her hat, and the vail goes with it. I watch them out of my half-closed eyes, and speculate on the old fable of the spider and the fly.

I would give a good deal to hear what they are saying, but they speak too low for this.

Hammond seems happy, and yet I can see the man acts peculiarly. Again the suspicion of a drug comes into my mind—this does not appear to be the same astute young politician who took such a prominent part in the debates at Albany, and charmed all hearers with his witty sallies, his shrewd logic, and lawyer-like method of making up his case.

He is like one in a dream, and unless something occurs to suddenly shock him, he cannot be aroused from this peculiar mental coma. Perhaps, before Chicago is reached, or soon after, I may find a way

of thus electrifying the young man, and bringing him to his senses.

To accomplish this I will have to be qualified to prove the base design these harpies have upon his purse, and I may need the assistance of the two English tourists in the matter. About the time we near Harrisburgh, in the afternoon, I find my interest aroused in a new quarter. Coming back to my seat after getting a drink—my real object was to see whether the English colonel was talking with the tourists—I discover a novel in my seat. There is no train newsboy around to bother one with his attentions, for we have quite a little library aboard, and I wonder who has been so kind as to loan me a book.

Mechanically I pick it up, and opening to the first page, find written in pencil, one line:

"Watch his jags the Rabbi."

Is this a mere accident, or can it be design?

I am puzzled to know, but at any rate there is no harm in keeping an eye on that end of the car where the Jew has his seat.

It seems like nonsense to think he has anything in common with these people, and as I watch his face, seen in the glass he fronts, I cannot believe it possible. Nevertheless, before five minutes have elapsed, I realize the weakness of human judgment, even when backed by such long experience as my own.

The colonel comes out of the passage leading around the drawing-room and smoking compartment. He glances swiftly toward the lovers—their heads are close together—just now Robert Hammond can see nothing before him but a laughing

face, bright magnetic eyes, and wavy brown hair that has made him captive.

As if assured that he will not be noticed—the sallow-faced woman is asleep in her seat; Larz Andrews suddenly bends over and whispers something in the ear of the Jew, who seems to receive the communication with considerable satisfaction, for as the other raises his head to pass on, the supposed Rabbi nods vigorously, and I take it he is signifying that he understands.

Here is another complication—what has this Jewish chap to do with the case. He must be in the plot somehow, and doubtless means to play his hand at the proper time.

My thoughts go back to the writing in the book.

Then it means exactly what it says, and was placed there for my benefit. This raises rather an interesting question for me—what friend have I on the sleeper, and why should they know that I watch these people?

The nun—suspicion directs me to that quarter the first thing, but I cannot reconcile the handwriting and style of the sentence with a woman. Is this nun a woman. I have not seen her face yet, and am not so positive about it, though her carriage and manner have so far given me no room for suspicion.

At least I am convinced of one thing—there is a regular clique of plotters on board the Vestibule Limited, and the object of their game is Robert Hammond and his millions. Their hook has been cunningly baited with a sweet face, and the victim has already bitten; whether he can by their united efforts be landed, depends wholly upon their ability, and my own efforts.

Somehow, I begin to wonder whether there may not be others still in the El Dorado, as our Pullman is named, connected with this case. How about the commercial traveler who has a seat opposite the nun, or the fast-looking "horsey" fellow, whose face gives indication of much cunning, such as comes to a man who has long lived on his wits. There is another—the Professor. He still keeps one eye on his beloved violin; it must be a Cremona of rare tone to be so valued. In case of accident, I am sure they will never haul the old man out unless his violin comes also.

He sits there with his head thrown back; I rather like the cast of his face, and wonder where, under the sun, I have looked into those same eyes before; but this is no time for reflections based upon curiosity alone. It occurs to me that the novel may have come in my seat from his hands; if so, who in the duse is he, that he desires to put me up to new wrinkles in the game that is being played?

Harrisburgh is left behind; we cross the long bridge over the Susquehanna, and begin to follow the river up for many miles, to finally leave it, and advance up the valley of the lovely Juniata.

The day is growing to a close. How weird the mountains appear around us, their tops outlined against the sky. It is a scene I am very fond of, but on this occasion I see without appreciating the charms of the rugged landscape, for my mind is busy with this strange mystery being worked to a conclusion on board the swift flying Limited express.

I have really grown weary watching the pair across the way. Through the whole afternoon they have acted like a couple of spoons, hardly noticing

any one else in the car. The infatuation is much the stronger on the part of the young man, however, as I can readily see, although she is flattered by his attention.

More than once, however, I notice a faint shade of weariness and disgust creep over her fair face, as he shows some unusual act of devotion, and I believe she does not care a great deal for Hammond after all.

She wearies of him. Such a nature really loves only wealth and power, though perhaps able to endure the means used to attain these. Some day, even if I do not have a hand in the game, Robert Hammond will have his eyes rudely opened, when he must realize what a fool he has been turned into by these schemers.

It will be a dreadful awakening for him.

I pity the young man; but all the same determine to cheat these harpies of the prey they are angling for so cleverly.

The evening is coming on.

Shadows fall athwart the track, since the sun is behind the western hills. Already it grows a little gloomy in the car. Presently the porter will be coming to light up.

At this time, I again pass out to quench my thirst; I seem to have eaten something exceedingly salty, for there is an almost constant desire for a drink of ice-water.

Into the glass I place a few drops of Jamaica ginger, knowing too well the effect of such a sudden change in my drinking water. The business on hand is of too serious a nature to allow of my getting sick.

I have managed to drain the glass, despite the

shaking of the car, when a hand touches me on the arm.

"Would the signor mind allowing me to have a dash of that Jamaica ginger?" says a voice.

I turn and see the old violinist.

His request is a simple one, and can be readily granted without trouble. Little courtesies like this are frequent between travelers on an Amercian railway. We become social and well disposed toward our fellow-passengers; indeed, often on long journeys the inmates of a sleeper act like members of a family, and care for each other's wants as far as practicable. This may seem strange to foreign eyes, but we live in a queer country anyhow. There is perfect freedom here, untrammeled by the restraints of custom.

At the same time, should a rascal take advantage of this opportunity and insult a lady, the chances are he would be tossed from the car by his indignant fellows.

I am convinced, however, that this man has a motive in following me to the end of the sleeper.

If, as I believe he is the party who has warned me that the Rabbi is in communication with these confidence people, it may pay me to make his acquaintance.

He hands my little bottle of ginger back and drinks the water he has dashed with the extract. I stand there leaning against the entrance to the smoking compartment, which I believe is empty, the English sportsmen having gone forward to see some friend, or enjoy the luxuries to be indulged in aboard this wonderful train, which include a bath-room, barber chair, and all the latest stock quotations. There are some people so wedded to their

business that even on a railway journey they like to be tied to their office with a connecting wire.

To the Englishmen this must indeed be a great surprise, for they treat business very lightly across the big pond, making it of secondary importance to many things in life. There is also a ladies' maid aboard, which is quite a nice thing for ladies traveling unattended or with childern.

The old violinist wipes his hands upon a towel, several times losing his balance, and nearly pitching into a mirror for the train is plunging along up the valley of the Juniata at a great rate of speed.

As he turns to leave I manage to say:

"Come in and sit down a while, friend, if thee is not in a hurry to return."

"Si, signor, I do not care if I do," he replies, with a smile, and passes into the smoking-room.

Here all is gloom, but I have my eye on a pendant knob near the corner, which I manage to insert in its proper place, and with the connection an electric light flashes up, soft and yet powerful. Here is another marvel of Yankee ingenuity to amaze our slow going English cousins.

As I believed, the little compartment is quite empty, and its soft cushions invite us to take it comfortably. The train jerks somewhat roughly, while thus speeding along toward Altoona, so that it is much more pleasant to be seated than endeavor to maintain an equilibrium standing.

The Professor drops into a corner and I find a seat beside him. If we are to have a confidential little chat, it is just as well that the ice be broken at once. I take out the novel and lay it in his lap.

"Thee was very kind and considerate to loan me the book, Professor; but thee knows I could not

read a novel. What tempted thee to speak so disrespectfully of the Israelite?"

The old violinist looks at me for a moment, gives a laugh, and brings his hand down on my knee with emphatic force.

"You're on to me, Craig, old man, I see!" he exclaims.

Phew! it's my employer, Colonel Acton himself!

CHAPTER V.

"THEY ARE ALREADY MAN AND WIFE!"

Although intensely surprised at this sudden disclosure I make sure not to betray it in my face. Under such circumstances, a man may hear that he has fallen heir to a million without showing emotion.

"What does this mean, colonel? Did you make up your mind at the last minute that I couldn't be trusted with the case?"

I am somewhat indignant, for it has never been his custom to interfere with a game after once turning it over to me. There has always been a sort of code of ethics on this subject, observed though not published. Acton looks serious.

"You must pardon me, Craig, for joining you in this game. In the first place you remember I told you I was strongly tempted to take up the business myself. Two will be better than one, anyhow, for unless the signs fail we will have our hands full with these people before the end is reached.

"I remembered after you had gone with the letter of advice, that there were several things I neglected to write out"—I think so, decidedly, myself, but say nothing—"and at first concluded to wire you at Philadelphia, in cipher. Then I found I would have plenty of time to meet you at the depot, and was just starting out with that purpose in view, when in came Jack Shark with a batch of news bearing on the subject.

"This was of such a serious character that I took the alarm at once, and made up my mind to go on the Limited, which accounts for my being here.

"Now let us join in heart and soul to accomplish the best results. We have a case before us that is worthy of our efforts. Are you offended, Craig, at my coming?"

He treats me more as a partner than an employee, and indeed the time is near at hand when I am to assume the higher office, according to the contract we have between us. All feelings of resentment vanish.

"There's my hand on it, colonel. Under the circumstances I had all I cared to look after, and if, as you say, there are other complications that I ought to know, it is only fair and proper for you to join me in the game."

"Spoken like a man. Now we'll see if we can't make these leeches sick of their bargain before they've gone much further with the affair."

I confess to a certain amount of curiosity with regard to the matter, both in relation to the information he has received, and the manner in which he expects to checkmate the schemers.

If he means to either warn or plead with Robert Hammond his time will be wasted, for that young man is his own master, and I can see from the cut of his jib that he will not be dictated to.

Some other means must be employed to effect the same result, and my acquaintance with Colonel Acton's abilities, gives me reason to believe he will be equal to the emergency.

"To begin with, Craig, what have you discovered?" he asks.

I speedily tell him all, even to the communication

between the nun and the yellow-faced female attendant seated in the section with the Jew. At mention of the magnificent diamonds, the colonel frowns and grits his teeth.

"The fool!" he mutters, "so blind, so utterly blind. It is the worst folly I have ever seen."

I take up the cudgels for Robert.

"You cannot blame him so much. That girl's face is enough to bewitch Satan himself. I'm an old campaigner, colonel, you know you always called me a woman hater, though I never deserved that name. But even I declare that that girl, under certain conditions, mind you, could have made a fool of me. I never saw such a natural born enchantress."

Acton shrugs his shoulders.

"If that is the case, Craig, I suppose I shouldn't blame a hot-blooded young fellow like Robert Hammond so much."

"He has been led on and deceived. I have no doubt he believes that girl is an angel, and would quickly resent, as a deadly insult, any suggestion reflecting on her character."

"I am sure of it, under the circumstances," he replies significantly.

With that I turn upon him.

"Now let me know what you have learned."

"Softly, Craig," as the porter passed by to light up the car with a flash of electric power.

We have been speaking in low tones all the time, caution being one of our natural attributes. The rush of the train deadens sounds, so that there is hardly any chance of a word we may utter reaching other ears.

"Judging from what you have seen, you believe

Hammond means to marry this charming adventuress?" he asks.

"I have no doubt he will make such a fool of himself unless we prevent it."

"That is impossible, Craig. They are already man and wife."

I give a whistle—it is the only way I can express my surprise.

"Then this is the latest news you picked up?" I ask, with some eagerness.

"A portion of Jack Shark's report."

"It looks as though our cake were dough then."

"Not yet, Craig, not yet. They've gained one point, but that doesn't satisfy them. In time the young fellow might spend the whole of his fortune on this girl; but time is valuable to them and they want to have the handling of that pile themselves. Do you comprehend?"

"I'm getting there fast—proceed."

"Perhaps you may have noticed something out of the way in Hammond's behavior?"

"Yes. I was in doubt for a time whether it was caused by his mad infatuation, or came from his having been drugged," I reply.

"What conclusion did you reach?"

"I compromised the matter, and decided that both causes worked in this case."

"Well, you were correct. They did drug him."

"Ah! these people do not hesitate about doing anything that advances their purpose."

"No, indeed."

"Who's the Rabbi—what has he to do with the affair, colonel?"

"He is really a doctor—Samuels by name, and bound body and soul to this Andrews. It was he

who furnished the drug that took away the last remnant of manly independence from Robert Hammond, and made him what you see, a poor, weak, love-sick fool. He does not realize what he is doing; his whole being appears to be wrapped up in this girl, and it seems to him he has no other object in life than to worship the brazen serpent."

"Poor devil; do you suppose he can ever be cured of this mad infatuation"

Acton again shrugs his broad shoulders.

"Possibly—if he lives."

Something in his tone, rather than the words themselves, startles me.

"If he lives—do you apprehend that these people would dare attempt his life?"

"Ah! Craig, you know full well there are many persons in this world who would hesitate at no crime were they certain of not being found out. The fear of detection keeps many persons honest."

"That is so, colonel."

"There are things connected with this affair that make me believe they intend going to the extreme end. Hammond's private fortune is worth nearly a million, and with such a rich stake no risk is too great for them to incur."

I shudder at the thought of that lovely girl deliberately planning the death of the man who worships so madly. After such an experience I am glad to know Duncan Craig is a bachelor.

"There are two things that cause me to believe it is their intention to make way with Robert Hammond at some time in the near future—perhaps before this journey is done.

"The first of these is the presence of Doctor Samuels on board the train. He is the man who,

when the time comes, will possibly supply the means for putting the other out of existence.

"A second lies in the fact that before leaving New York, Robert Hammond made a will, leaving all his property to his beloved wife Evangeline."

"Ah! that is her name now, eh?

"Yes. You see the drift of things, Craig?"

"Indeed, I do, colonel. As you say, it has a very serious look. Even if we prevent a tragedy it will be an ugly business, as she is his wife all the same."

"Ah! once let his eyes be opened so that he sees the girl in her true light—once let him realize that she has plotted to murder him, and this love will turn to aversion and disgust. Under such circumstances I do not think we will find it very difficult to annul the marriage."

"Upon what grounds?"

"A previous marriage."

"Of course she has played this same game before, and we can get proof of it."

Then I tell him about the two English sportsmen, and what passed between them while they were looking after the colonel and his charge.

"I wouldn't say anything to them about the matter—at least not at present. In case of necessity we can have their evidence when the proper time comes."

"What shall we do meanwhile?"

"Watch and wait."

This is good advice under all circumstances, and I know that just now it is all we can expect to do.

If, with both of us on the lookout, the desperate game is not blocked, then the schemers certainly deserve to succeed.

There is only one thing I am uneasy about, and this is Robert Hammond himself. If he takes it into his head to be ugly he can give us a great amount of trouble.

When the time comes for the denouement we must handle him gently, in a manner befitting his peculiar frame of mind.

The colonel and myself talk it over a little longer, and have about decided how we are to keep watch and watch about, when the door of the car is thrown open to admit the steward of the hotel-car, who announces, passing through:

"Supper ready in the dining-car!"

As we have arranged it, I go in first, and when I come back in half an hour or so, Acton is to take my place. Thus, by dividing our forces, we can keep the people under surveillance.

Nothing new transpires during the progress of the meal. The three come in before I am done, and I see Acton seated ere I leave.

I notice one thing.

Evangeline is a woman, with all that implies, so far as love for gems is concerned. She has been unable to resist the temptation longer, and when she enters the brilliantly lighted dining-car I notice that she has on the diamonds which Robert has recently given her.

They show to great advantage on her lovely person, and add to her charms, seeming to increase his mad worship.

I almost think he will eat her up, for his gaze when looking at her is certainly of the devouring order; and she keeps leading him on with the most exasperating little tricks, that I do not wonder some men have gone crazy with love and murdered their

sweethearts. It is playing with fire to toy with the heart of a man who is desperately in love—like the bursting out of a volcano that smoldering passion may overleap all bounds and bring destruction upon the one nearest its shadow.

Something tells me we will dig deeper into this mystery of the Limited express before morning comes. As time rolls on the train pushes steadily onward, mounting the Alleghenies to Horse-shoe Bend and Altoona.

CHAPTER VI.

READY FOR THE TEST.

When I return again to the sleeper, the first person I notice is the nun. She is eating lunch with the sallow-faced woman, and keeps her head down so that I cannot see her countenance.

This reminds me that I have neglected to ask Acton about her, who she is, and what connection she has with the game. He must know, and yet has not seen fit to tell me. Perhaps it is an oversight. At any rate, I will have no scruples about asking him the next time I think of it, and the chance arises.

The Rabbi has gone to get his supper, but the horse dealer or race-track gambler sits in his seat. I wonder if he has anything to do with this strange case, for it seems to me half the people in the car have already become connected with it, and there is a chance for the rest to work in yet.

He appears to be a shrewd sort of chap, and independent, too, caring little for any one about him. I do not like his looks, however, and avoid him, though when in passing my seat he ventures some ordinary remark concerning the jolting of the car around the bends, in apology for almost plunging into my lap, I reply civilly enough, though my manner does not invite confidence.

After a time the others return, and once more the car is filled.

We reach Altoona.

A few berths are being made up. I watch the people opposite to me like a hawk, and yet they do not know it. There are more ways of doing this same thing than enters into the philosophy of most persons.

The girl is his wife, but she seems to be still under the charge of her father. Perhaps the marriage has been a secret one, or a pretense made that way. At any rate, he is not to be known as a husband—yet.

While looking on the sly, I see her slip something into his hand, and this he hastily puts into his pocket, laughing at some remark she makes in a low tone.

Although I have had just the merest glimpse of the article, I am of the opinion it is a small vial of some sort.

There flashes across my mind the suspicion that this may be an important part in the plot against Hammond.

What does that vial contain?

When is he to take it?

Under the circumstances, I am of the opinion that Acton should know the facts, and, as if to answer my wish, he passes up the aisle just then, giving me a peculiar wink, which I know means that I am to follow.

He has something to communicate, and this is a time when prompt action must take place.

So I go after him again.

It is lucky that the smokers have smoked themselves out, for we find a good use to which we can put the little compartment.

Acton grips my shoulder at once.

"Craig, did you see her give him something?" he asks, anxiously.

I reply in the affirmative.

"Then I was not deceived. I thought such a thing occurred, and yet did not actually see it, judging only from their actions. Tell me, what was it?"

"As near as I can judge a small vial."

"Good Heavens, man! then our worst suspicions are about to come true. They have doomed Robert Hammond."

"You think it was poison?"

"I am sure of it, Craig. We cannot afford to let this thing go on. You must get possession of that bottle."

I rub my head.

"By force, colonel?"

"Try strategy first, but if necessary, give it all away to the young man. We will find some means to open his eyes, and I think I can give you a pointer."

With which he tells me of a little plan whereby Hammond may receive a shock. I like it at once, and agree with Acton that perhaps it is the best thing to be done.

If luck favors us and keeps the little compartment empty, all will be well. We hope for the best, like the early settlers in New England, when threatened by the Indians "trusting in Providence, yet keeping our powder dry."

Acton returns to his place, and I take an observation, which reveals the fact that the party are over in my seat, while the porter makes up the berths in three.

Presently, Andrews comes into the lavatory to wash his hands and take a night-cap before retiring. He passes a few pleasant words with me, and I realize that the man is a most accomplished

fellow. At the same time I believe him to be as great a rascal as ever went unhung. I am amazed at his assurance, plotting murder actually on the famous Vestibule Limited. Perhaps he imagines that the very publicity of the affair will prove an additional safeguard.

I am waiting.

Hammond will surely come, and I sincerely trust he may be reasonable. It has been agreed upon between Acton and myself that as we cannot hope to make him believe that Evangeline has been cognizant of his contemplated death, and, fearing lest he may make a scene, it will be best to let him grasp the truth gradually.

Thus, I mean to make out just now that it is the wicked father who is plotting his death, making Evangeline his unconscious agent.

When he has accepted this, we can fight off the climax, and gradually get matters around in a shipshape fashion.

Ah! he comes.

Hardly noticing me, he allows some water to run into the basin, and proceeds to wash. When he rubs his face and hands vigorously with the towel, I speak.

"Mr. Hammond!"

Turning, he surveys me.

"Did you speak, sir?"

"I did. Would you mind stepping into this room with me? I have something of the utmost importance to communicate."

He cannot well refuse, but I see a look of suspicion upon his face. Perhaps he is in the humor to doubt every one save Evangeline.

"Be seated, please."

He drops beside me.

"First of all, you are not a Quaker," he says, with something of a sneer in his voice.

"I am not. I spoke purposely in a way you could not mistake, for I desire that you know just who I am and why I am here."

"Go on," he says, biting his lips.

"Mr. Hammond, you are accounted a sensible man in New York, and in the past have always been ready to listen to reason."

"I trust I am still," he remarks.

"I hope to Heaven you are, sir, for I have a most astonishing piece of intelligence to tell you, and one that might well tax the credulity of any person. You are being made the victim of a great conspiracy, Mr. Hammond."

He frowns, and then laughs.

"Indeed! Well, it wouldn't be the first time, I reckon. My worldly goods have tempted rascals before now to making an effort at my capture, looking to a ransom."

"This time I am sorry to say they have well nigh succeeded. There is a clique on board this train sworn to strip you of your wealth."

"Quite dramatic, that," he says, nonchalantly.

"Mr. Hammond, perhaps you will see the seriousness of this matter when I swear to you that the man you call friend, Colonel Larz Andrews, is at the head of this clique."

With that he scowls blackly.

"Stop right where you are, sir. You, an utter stranger, dare to accuse her father of such a vile business. I have half a mind——"

"Mr. Hammond, I appeal to your good sense. I

have said nothing about the girl—it is the man I accuse of plotting against your life."

"My life?" startled.

"Yes, that is what it means, sir. This league against you can only secure your fortune over your dead body."

"Come, this sounds like a scene from the latest play," he sneers.

"All the world's a stage, sir. The same things represented on the boards occur in real life every day. I solemnly swear your life is in danger from that man."

"Look here, sir, you must prove your words or eat them here and now," almost fiercely, as the thought comes again that the man I accuse is the father—as he believes—of his wife.

"That I am willing to do, if you will favor me with your attention."

"Well, since you claim that my life is in danger, I would be a fool not to listen. I hope I haven't reached that stage yet. By the way, who are you, sir?"

"You wouldn't know me if I gave you my name. Call me Jones if you please."

"Then what are you?"

"A detective officer of New York."

"Did any one hire you to look after me—I chance to know certain members of my family object to my intimacy with Colonel Andrews and his daughter—have they sent you here to cause a rupture between us?"

I shake my head.

"I do not know who employs me, as I have seen no one. All business has been done through my

superior, Colonel Acton, whose name is respected through all New York."

"Well, the proof, man?" impatiently.

I have aroused his curiosity, and that is one point gained at least.

"Pardon me, Mr. Hammond, but would you let me see the little vial handed to you by the lady some time ago?"

He flushes red at once.

"That cannot interest you, sir," he replies.

"Again I ask your pardon, but it does interest me very much, and it certainly can do no harm for you to show it to me. Hold it in your hand, if you please."

He eyes me keenly a moment, puts a couple of fingers in his vest pocket, and takes out a small bottle, which, as he holds up to the light, I see contains a reddish fluid.

"If I am not mistaken, Mr. Hammond, I saw the Jewish doctor in section eight fill that vial from a larger one, which he then tossed out of the car-door. I was sitting in here, and he did not notice me, as it was almost dark. Under ordinary circumstances, I should hardly have noticed his action, but knowing he was in this miserable clique against you I watched him. Tell me, what are you going to do with that?"

"Take it when I retire—it is an opiate to induce sleep."

"Ah! my dear fellow, I fear that it may bring the sleep that knows no waking."

"Sir, you forget that I received this from the hand of a lady—one with whom I could trust my life. I will prove how much I am willing to believe in her."

He raises his hand and removes the stopper—just in time I catch his arm.

"Rash man, you tempt your fate. What would you do now?" I demand.

"Drain the bottle, and by living, prove your story to be the fabric of a diseased imagination."

"Or, what is more likely, by dying, prove the truth of it. See here, Mr. Hammond, as I said before, I believe you to be a sensible man. Show it by agreeing with me that since there may be a mistake about this liquid, you will at least make an experiment before swallowing it yourself."

"What you say is reasonable, sir, but let me see you produce the subject for the test."

"Ah! fortune enables me to do so, Mr. Hammond."

CHAPTER VII.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

Thus speaking, I bend down and from a corner of the smoker take a common grape basket, such as is sold in New York with some ten pounds of the fruit. It has a wooden cover to it, tied with a string, and in this cover are a number of holes, roughly made with a knife, as if to let air in to the captive.

I untie the cord and raise the lid.

"Look here, sir."

"Ah! a Maltese cat, half grown. Where did you get it, sir?" he asks.

"Some one gave it to the porter, and he is taking it to his Chicago girl. Now I propose that while I hold this cat's mouth open you allow a small portion of that liquid to pass down its throat. Then we will tie the lid again and await developments. If the liquid is harmless the cat will sleep, but if what I believe is true——"

I end the sentence with a shrug, and seizing the feline in a way to avoid resistance, open its mouth.

Robert Hammond hesitates.

"Do what you promised, man," I exclaim.

My words seem to nerve him to the effort, for he suddenly empties about a third of the liquid down the red throat. Then I release the cat. The animal sneezes, shakes its head and looks surprised. It offers no resistance while I replace it once more in

the basket, and fastening the string await further developments.

Hammond mechanically puts the vial away in his pocket, looking at me in a dazed state.

I am conscious of exercising some influence upon his actions, perhaps serving as a counter-irritant, and for this I am glad. If Hammond were in his ordinary health, he would never give up to me like this, for he has been known as a leader among men.

"Now, sir, while we wait for the stuff to work—and I think the quantity you gave the cat will start operations in a few minutes—I desire to tell you some plain truths.

"My employer, Colonel Acton, is on board this train, deeply interested in your case. There are, besides, two English gentlemen traveling for pleasure—one I believe is a nobleman—who will swear to you that this man you know as Larz Andrews is a rascal of the first water—a confidence man ready to take any risk for a fortune."

I can see his face show signs of trouble.

"Poor Evangeline!" I hear him mutter; "if this should prove true, it will be a sad blow to your pride. We must keep it a secret, if it turns out as represented."

I hardly know what to say or think. There are none so blind as those who will not see. How foolishly he deludes himself with the idea that one could be innocent while the other is guilty. Still, that is one of the follies of a woman's witchcraft—the man who loves her sees nothing wrong in the object of his worship.

"Mr. Hammond, have you recently purchased any medicine?" I ask.

"No, sir. I have not been sick."

"Have you bought anything in a drug store?"

"Not for myself."

"For any one else, then?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind telling me what it was?"

"H'm, I don't know," he replies.

"How is that—forgotten?"

"Evangeline gave me a piece of paper with something on it—a doctor's prescription, I believe—but my mind being occupied with other things I did not notice. As I passed a drug store I went in and had it filled for her."

"Ah! did the druggist say anything?"

"He knows me well, glanced at the paper, and asked if I meant to use it myself, and upon my replying absent-mindedly that I did, he said he would write the directions again on the label. I paid him and came out, handing the bottle to Evangeline, later, without removing the paper."

"I see, sir, and it soon went into the hands of Andrews, and from him to Doctor Samuels, whom I saw filling this small vial. Was it a square bottle you purchased, sir?"

"I believe it was."

"Then see for yourself how this clique of assassins have arranged to get your property. If that liquid, taken in quantity, is a deadly poison, and you are found stiff and stark in your berth tomorrow morning, all the evidence will point to suicide, for you purchased the stuff yourself, and even declared you meant to use it."

His eyes are opening to the awful truth, though he still persists in remaining blind with relation to

that one point—her guilt, and I dare not attempt too much at once.

"You present a very ingenious theory, Mr. Jones; but there is one weak spot in it."

"How is that?"

"I don't comprehend how my death would benefit this clique of rascals."

Here is another hurdle to be leaped; I am to tell him the truth, and yet not all the truth. Really, such a man must be handled as a lineman manipulates a live electric wire—with gloves.

"Then I must explain, Mr. Hammond. To do so I will prove that what is a secret to the world is not such to me."

He looks startled.

"Go on."

"You are married to Evangeline?"

"Yes."

"Her father"—with an emphasis on the word that must haunt him later—"is supposed not to know of this thing; but he does, and it was through his influence that before leaving New York you went to a lawyer and made your will, leaving all your property to your wife, in case anything happened to you."

Hammond is surprised at the extent of my knowledge, and cannot but show it. Giving him no time to speak I continue:

"That document is now safe in the wallet of Colonel Larz Andrews, instead of in the keeping of your wife as you believe."

"Confusion!" he ejaculates.

"Now, Mr. Hammond, you will confess that I am your friend; I wish to save you from this league of rascals, and if necessary, against yourself. For

God's sake, sir, awaken to the fact that your peril is great and do not trust any one who has not proved a friend."

"Don't attempt to set me against my wife, Mr. Jones. I will not believe a syllable if you do. If wrong has been done me, she has been an unconscious tool!" he exclaims, stubbornly.

"I have said nothing against her yet, Mr. Hammond. All I want to do is to get your eyes opened to the fact that danger hangs over your head. Once you believe that, I am sure you will take reasonable measures for protection against these people."

"Well, you have not proved it yet, sir," with some show of defiance.

I pick up the basket.

"Let us see how the animal is getting on."

Placing it to my ear I can hear no sound from within the basket. There seems to be a dead weight under the cover; I can distinguish a difference between the present and that other time of lifting it, when the cat rested on its feet. My meaning must be clear, when I state that a basket with a dead cat in it appears to weigh more than one containing a live animal.

Unfastening the cord, I remove the lid.

Both of us glance eagerly into the basket, and just as I expected, in the ten minutes that have elapsed, the cat has stiffened out in death. There has been no struggle; the poison is of such a nature that, taken in quantity, it paralyzes and then brings a speedy death.

I am horrified myself when I gaze upon the awful effects of the drug, even though expecting just such a spectacle. As for Hammond, I really feel sorry

for the man. His eyes almost protrude from his head.

"Is it dead?" he gasps.

"Take hold and see."

He does so, and lets go with a shiver.

"Ugh! dead as a door nail! And that is what would have happened to me. Mr. Jones, I am grateful to you for saving my life."

"I hope you believe I spoke the truth, now."

"There can be no doubt of that, but perhaps it is the fault of the druggist—he may have given me the wrong article."

How he clings to a straw! I am more than astonished at it.

"Druggists seldom make those mistakes, Mr. Hammond, and when you come to investigate the matter later on you will find that this one filled the prescription you gave him to the letter. He will have it in evidence, too. It is probably made out with the name of some fictitious doctor attached."

"And they meant I should be murdered?" he mutters, touching the poor cat again.

"It certainly looks that way. Their plans have been successfully carried out to that very point. Everything else has worked well."

"And this would have done the same if it hadn't been for you."

"You admit that I have saved your life, Mr. Hammond. Then trust in me further, and let me get you out of the toils of these plotters."

"I will, sir, but do not attempt to convince me that she knows aught of this; that she has even suspected my life was threatened."

"Whether Evangeline proves innocent or guilty, sir, you must make up your mind to be prepared for

the worst. At any rate give me your word that you will not tell even her how you escaped this terrible fate."

"What excuse can I give?"

"State that you took an overdose of the sleeping potion, show the empty vial in evidence, and they will believe that you threw off the stuff, thus making a failure of their plans."

"Ah! I see; that I was very sick in the night."

"Exactly. In return for what I have done for you will you promise me not to say a word of what has happened, even to her?"

"I promise."

It is about as much as I can get from the man; his infatuation for Evangeline clings closer than anything I have ever seen. The best that I have been able to do is to temporarily save his life, and cause him to believe there is a clique formed against him.

What result this will have in the future I am utterly unable to say.

Robert Hammond empties the vial in the wash-basin before leaving me, and I rejoice to see the last of the deadly fluid thus destroyed. No doubt they may be able to get more, but we have defeated the villains in the first round, and if the young man does not inadvertently betray us, may be able to finally worst them.

The Hammond million is still safe.

How long it will remain so depends a great deal upon the kindness of fortune; as long as the young man continues to be infatuated with the pretty adventuress, and believes in her innocence, we cannot crush the conspiracy against him, of which she is the corner-stone. He goes to his berth to retire.

I have the upper one, and am in no hurry to seek it, knowing I shall not get a great amount of sleep anyhow—I never do when traveling, as my thoughts seem to keep pace with the rattle of the wheels beneath.

As it is, I am somewhat disappointed with my work, though really I have succeeded as well as I could have expected, knowing how deeply the young man is enamored with the adventuress whom he has married in secret ere leaving New York.

We must leave it to the future, and work it out on a new plan. In some way Robert Hammond's eyes must be opened to the perfidy of the charmer who has cast a spell upon him.

CHAPTER VIII.

EVIDENCE TOSSED OVERBOARD.

Just as I expect, the old violinist presently makes his way back to the smoking compartment and joins me.

"Well?"

It is only one word, but when spoken with such peculiar emphasis means a great deal.

I begin and tell Colonel Acton all that has taken place between Hammond and myself, and when he learns how the young man persists in believing Evangeline pure and honest, in the midst of such desperate rascals, he—well, he says something naughty which shocks my Quaker ears.

It is exasperating to find a sensible man thus making such a fool of himself, and I don't blame the colonel for showing temper. Had Robert disclosed even ordinary wisdom and prudence we might have been able at this time to have given the clique due warning that unless they let him severely alone and made tracks from Chicago, arrest would follow. As it is, they still have the best of us.

What can be done?

In the morning, the plotters will be astonished to find Robert alive and well, but his explanation will satisfy them that he took an overdose, causing him to lose the poison before it could get to work.

They will simply make up their minds that it must be tried again.

Under these circumstances we will also have our work over, and perhaps the second time may not be so successful in saving the young man's life.

"If he suffers eventually, it will be his own fault. You did your work well, Craig, and I am proud of it. Was there ever such a stupid mess—deliver me from a bright young man made foolish by a pretty face."

"Ditto, there, colonel," I echo, "it's about as hard to manage him as a drunken man."

"By the way, I have had quite a little adventure myself, while you were here."

"Indeed!"

I cannot conceive what he means, for an adventure in a sleeping car can hardly be of a thrilling nature.

"You remember the man opposite me?"

"Ah! the race-track sharp?"

"You didn't take to him."

"Great Scott! is he in the game too?"

Acton nods his head and smiles.

"He has an interest in two of the characters."

"Meaning Andrews and the charming Ann Reilly."

"Exactly. He has come all the way across the big pond to find them."

"From Scotland Yard, colonel?"

"Yes. He's no other than Sergeant Billings—you've head of him."

"I have, indeed, and will be glad to meet him again. I had quite a little adventure in his company in London when bound around the world some years ago; but I never once suspected his identity."

"No, he's well fixed up."

"How did you come to address him?"

"It came about gradually. Each of us saw that the other was interested in these people. He noticed me give you that novel and while I was in here got hold of it, and saw what I had written on the fly-leaf about the Jew. Then he ventured to address me, and we finally proved our identity. While you have been engaged with Hammond, we have been talking business."

"You say he follows these people?"

"Yes, he has a mission—something they did on the other side. I believe the girl married a lord and made way with something belonging to him, either jewels or valuable papers. At any rate, Billings is after them."

"She married a lord; if Robert could only learn that his infatuation would cease. Do you know whether this man has any proofs?"

"I believe he has—her English photograph with the name Ann Reilly written out, also the newspaper accounts of her daring escapades in the tight little isle. She was playing hob with them all, and the country breathed easier when she emigrated to America."

"Jove! she's a wonderful creature, and if she lives ten years, the record of her life will read like the "Arabian Nights." Ruin and misery must follow in her path; I pity all who are charmed by her bright eyes."

"Take care yourself, Craig. Each man believes he is the one who has won her; that all others are her victims, but in him she has found her match. Do not let her enslave you."

The solemn manner in which the colonel says this causes me to laugh.

"I don't believe there is much danger; my heart is iron-bound this long time," I declare.

"Glad to hear that, Craig. Stick to it, man. If it comes to a pinch I believe she'd endeavor to make a fool of the party engaged in running her clique down."

"Another thought strikes me, colonel."

"Well, out with it before you lose it."

"It concerns another party connected with this case, and whom you failed to tell me about."

"Ah! Sister Therese!"

"The nun."

"What do you want to know about her?"

"Who is she?"

"Robert Hammond's sister."

"Is she really a nun?"

"I do not think so, though I have only seen her twice. The first time she came to the office and appeared as a fashionable New York woman. The second time, and most unexpectedly, was on the train."

"You didn't look for her here?"

"Never dreamed of it, but soon guessed her identity. Robert did not mention her, or speak as though he had recognized her, I suppose?"

"No, but he has guessed that we are working in the interest of his family."

"That would be easy for him."

"I presume, colonel, it was his sister you made the engagement with?"

"Yes, though his father is still living. They feel this thing deeply, and as their eyes are not blinded by love as are Robert's, they can see what is patent to others."

"Does she know of his marriage?"

"I reckon not."

"That will shock her."

"Undoubtedly, Craig. But women are queer creatures—you never know how to take 'em."

"Ah! you speak from experience, colonel."

"Yes, I've got the dearest little wife at home, as you know, and yet there are times when she is a puzzle to me—she has fits of the blues, and makes up for it by an exuberance of spirits. By Jove! Craig, no man can understand the vagaries of a woman's soul; and yet they are the blessing of life, God knows. What would we do without them? I often compare my wife to a magnetic needle I've seen in a ship's compass—quivering under the least motion, perhaps swaying a little right or left, but always returning true north. She's as reliable as that needle in the compass."

I like to hear the colonel talk like this, for I have very tender memories of the dear mother, long gone, and my ideas of women are very much in the same strain as his. I know what their weakness is and again I appreciate their worth.

No one has ever heard Duncan Craig, old bachelor that he is, rail against the sex. I pity those who do, for I know they must have had a wretched type of a mother.

There is nothing more to be done at present, since those we watch have retired. I am just about to suggest to the colonel that we follow their example, and get some sleep while the Vestibule Limited booms along toward Pittsburgh when a new party appears on the scene.

This is the horse fancier.

He has come to the toilet department to get a

drink of water, and mix something in it, as an inducement to sleep.

Acton calls him into the smoker, and introduces us. Billings catches the name at once.

"Duncan Craig, did you say. Bless my soul, I've met the man before!" he exclaims, as he clutches my hand earnestly.

Laughing, I tell him where, and of course we sit down to talk over old times again. An hour flies before we are aware of it, and when the colonel excuses himself, we realize that the earlier half of the night is pretty well spent.

So we part and seek our respective berths.

Removing my shoes, I clamber aloft as softly as possible. The berth is comfortable enough to suit the most fastidious, but I am one of those unfortunates who get little sleep when on a journey.

At any rate, I can lie there and rest, while my thoughts are busy. The steady motion of the train assists me in wooing the gentle goddess, and I finally drop off in a doze. If it had been an ordinary train, each stop at a station would have aroused me. As it is I sleep an hour or more.

We reach Pittsburgh, and, being awake, I drop down, pull on my shoes, don my coat and hat, and step out, to view the depot.

The say is not very long, and with the cry of "all aboard" I again mount the steps and pass into the vestibule. I remain up until we have crossed the river, and then once more mount to my berth.

This is the way I generally pass a night while *en route.* If I have more than one on the trip I sleep better on each succeeding night until at the end of a week my slumber is peaceful enough.

When I look at my watch again, it is half-past

three, and I sigh with satisfaction to see that the larger part of the night has gone. At intervals, the train makes furious time, I am sure a mile a minute, and I fairly hold my breath as we fly along.

As before, that intolerable thirst comes to me. I resist for quite a while, but my mouth and throat seem so parched that I can stand it no longer, so I get down from my berth, and pass along between the curtains to where the ice-water is to be found, not forgetting to take the Jamaica ginger with me.

There is no movement in the lower berth, and I imagine Robert Hammond must be sleeping soundly. I quite envy the fellow and wish I could follow suit, little realizing what that might mean.

Once in the lavatory I allow some water to pass into a glass, add the few drops of ginger, and seat myself upon the stool near by. It will do no good to gulp the water down; in order to quench that thirst I allow the contents of the glass to trickle along my throat.

It is not far from daylight, and we are making things hum over the level stretches on the way to Fort Wayne.

The porter is abroad, and will soon be at work polishing the shoes of the inmates of the El Dorado. I hear him in the smoking compartment utter an exclamation. Then he comes into view, holding the grape basket.

"Bress my soul, if de pore little mouser ain't done gone dead!" he says, lifting out the defunct cat tenderly.

My conscience reproaches me for having been the cause of the wretched animal's demise, but I remember that it was to save a human life, and that eases the strain. I would like to make it up to the

fellow in some way, but dare not tell him I killed the cat, for fear lest he may become suspicious. Hence, I determine that when leaving the car, I will give him a fee to open his eyes and make him think I am a Russian duke traveling *incog.*

I am gratified to see him take the dead cat and toss it outside, basket and all. Thus all evidence of my work is destroyed.

"Better luck, Sam, next time you try to smuggle a menagerie into Chicago," I say.

"Hope so, sah," he replies, showing his ivories, and beginning on a pair of boots.

CHAPTER IX.

AN AWFUL DISCOVERY.

It is still dark outside.

The stars shine overhead; I can see them as I glance out of the window. At the same time we pass through quite a town with a clanging of the engine bell, hardly slackening our tremendous speed. I catch fugitive glimpses of lamps on the street, fed by the natural gas that has been cropping up all over this region, see a few houses, all of which appear dark and deserted at this hour, and then we rush out upon the open land again with accelerated speed.

This traveling on the Limited express is a thrilling experience, even to an old tourist, when one sits down to realize what tremendous forces are invoked to speed across nearly a thousand miles in twenty-three hours, over a great mountain chain, through deep valleys, along majestic rivers and over broad prairies.

One morning you breakfast in New York, and a little after nine o'clock on the next day you take your morning meal in the great metropolis of the West.

To a novice it must be a revelation indeed, this annihilation of time and space, surrounded by all the luxuries money can buy or the craft of man invent.

As there is no use in my remaining up any longer, I again seek that lofty berth. I do not expect to

sleep, but somehow sink into slumber, and fail to awaken until long after daybreak. This surprises me, and I remember that the first thing I do upon discovering what a march I have stolen upon time is to chuckle.

It is really nearly eight o'clock by my time. I forget that Central time is an hour later, as we changed at Pittsburgh, and believe I will have only a good chance to get fixed up ere we draw near Chicago.

As I clamber down from the upper berth, I glance in to see if Hammond has arisen. The shades of the window are drawn, but I can see him lying on his side, the back of his head toward me. Really he is a champion sleeper, and would make a good traveler. Had I been in his shoes I should have found myself unable to get a wink of sleep, with so much pressing on my mind.

Shoes and coat in hand I betake myself to the gentlemen's end of the sleeper, and proceed to make my toilet. I find the actor there, and have to wait until the commercial drummer is through ere I can get a basin in which to dash the sleep from my eyes with a liberal application of cold water.

It feels very grateful to me indeed; I know of nothing that will freshen a man up better after a weary night's ride on a train than such a shock to the system as is produced by ice-cold water, followed by a liberal application of the coarse towel, which, unfortunately, is seldom found on a sleeper.

Talking with the actor, I pass some time away, and set my watch by Central time. When it marks eight, I glance in to see if my berth has been made up.

All the others in the car are but section four, and

here the curtains still hang from the bar above. Robert is certainly enjoying his sleep.

It is a habit with some persons who are apt to be sick after rising in the morning, to remain in their berth until almost at their journey's end—provided that destination is reached by a reasonable morning hour. Hence, the porter does not disturb Robert. It is no unusual thing to see a section thus left until the last half-hour. The porter keeps an eye on it, as he desires to have his car all made up when arriving.

I return again to the smoker, where a few parties are indulging. Breakfast can be had in the dining-car. Some go in while others, having no appetite, prefer to wait and enjoy a meal upon a solid foundation.

The level prairie greets the eye as we fly along, and a monotonous spectacle it is. Here and there we see farms, with great stacks of hay, and the corn in the shock through acre after acre.

I have something of the hunter in my veins, and notice a covey of quail drawing the attention of the Englishmen to the spot just before the birds drop to the corn-field again. They enjoy the spectacle, and immediately talk "shop," anticipating great sport among the wild fowl of the North-west, until I almost envy them.

I find them agreeable company, and no doubt astonish them with my Quaker tongue and stirring reminiscences by field and flood during years gone by, when I had more ambition to shoot than at present. The two things do not harmonize, but they seem to enjoy my company, and I kill time.

A quarter after eight and we are due in Chicago at nine.

Confound the fellow, will he ever wake up?

I never knew such a sleeper.

Perhaps the drug given him from time to time, to weaken his mind and make him more of a slave to the charms of the adventuress, has caused him to be unusually drowsy.

Well, let him sleep.

I can get the small valise I carry, at the last.

Andrews and his charming daughter have gone in to get breakfast.

I wonder how they feel this morning? As they pass me coming back, I try to read their faces.

The man shows no concern, but upon the girl's countenance I detect an uneasy expression. She has played many a desperate game for money ere now, but this is probably the first time she has been concerned in the taking of a human life. In time she will no doubt be equal to anything, but it gives her a little qualm of conscience—providing she has such a commodity.

I feel a little sorry for the girl.

Perhaps it is because she possesses such a bewitching face; I would not like to say otherwise. Then I remember how it was her hand from whom young Hammond received that deadly drug.

That hardens my heart toward her. She has doomed him to a terrible death, the man whose greatest fault was in loving her, not wisely but too well. A curse be upon that fair head; it is like the flashing will-o'-the-wisp, that leads men astray in the night, hovering here, enticing them on, and finally drawing them to the swamp of destruction.

Her victims will be counted by scores ere her wicked reign is over. I grow to hate her beauty

more and more, even while strangely attracted by it.

When she brushes the curtains of section four, in passing to her seat, how a shudder must shoot through her frame, to believe that just beyond them lies the stiff and cold body of her victim. Of course neither of them suspect the truth or that Robert lives.

In imagination I see their utter astonishment when he appears. I chuckle at the very thought of the consternation that must come upon the conspirators.

Their plans will be changed considerably.

When all ready to exhibit grief and surprise, over the body of the supposed suicide, they must endeavor to control the feeling of bitter disappointment over his awakening.

I slip into the car, and find a seat beside Colonel Acton, who has his beloved violin in his hands, and still carries out the character of the old violinist.

We wait for the denouement.

Meanwhile I amuse myself in watching the various persons interested in this mystery of the Vestibule Limited.

There is the Jew, for instance—as the dreadful moment draws near, when he is to act his part in the drama, he grows very nervous. I see him clasp his hands and twist his fingers about, while his eyes are almost involuntarily drawn to the mirror facing him, as he watches to see when the awful discovery is made.

He is about to earn his share of the blood money, and is nerved for the work. I know the kind of man Samuels is—there are many leeches in New York like him.

I turn my eyes upon the nun.

She does not dream of the awful fate hovering over the head of her brother, but I can see she is worried because he does not make his appearance.

Once or twice she half rises as though tempted to go to him; but remembering the character she has assumed, she sinks back in her seat again with a weary expression or gesture.

What if we had not divined the intentions of the evil plotters, and their game had been allowed to go on to its awful end—this faithful sister must have received a terrible shock.

I believe the colonel has a plan arranged, but he has not seen fit to take me into his confidence as yet, and I can only wait, possessing my soul in patience.

Our time is short now.

We draw near the outskirts of the great city on the lake. It wants only about twenty minutes of the hour when we ought to arrive in the depot, and the conductor has assured us that we are on time.

Soon there must be a stir.

Several times the porter has poked his head in, and glanced uneasily at section four.

He desires to make it up, and is puzzled at the idea of a man remaining so long in his berth—had it been a woman his surprise might not have shown itself.

We have made a marvelous run of it, and the end is near; but the drama that has been conducted on board the fast flying Limited will be transferred elsewhere. The men who are at the head of the conspiracy for a million will not acknowledge themselves beaten because their plans fail to succeed in the first instance.

The fertile brain in which was conceived this cunning plot, is rich in expedients, and must soon arrange another scheme to accomplish the same end, which it will surely do unless Acton and myself intervene.

Ah! the porter can stand it no longer. He is coming down the aisle with a grim look upon his black face, and evidently means to arouse the sound sleeper by telling him we are in Chicago, and he must get up.

Those opposite do not seem to understand that this is his object; or it may be they desire the others in the sleeper to realize that they are getting anxious.

"Porter!" calls the honorable Colonel Larz Andrews, with a wave of his hand.

"Yes, sah!"

The colored functionary bends his head and keeps his itching palm ready for any possible tip, for now is the season of his great anxiety, as he will reap the rewards of his labor.

"We are near Chicago?"

"Be dar in about fifteen minutes—now eight-forty-five," responds the lackey.

"Ah! then I wish you would arouse our young friend yonder. I'm afraid he isn't well—he complained last night of his headache. Tell him he must get up, porter."

"Yes, sah," grins the darky, as he pockets a piece of silver—all this has been spoken in a purposely loud tone, and every one on board the sleeper El Dorado hears.

The porter unfastens the heavy curtains and pokes his head and shoulders into the berth. I can

hear one of the shades fly up on springs as he lets it go.

Then suddenly there is a commotion; the porter jumps back with his eyes bulging from his head and his trembling finger pointing to the berth.

"Gorry!" he ejaculates, "de young gent am dead!"

CHAPTER X.

"IS HE DEAD?"

The scene that follows almost beggars description; in all my life I have never witnessed a more thrilling situation, and I have been on a wrecked train, on board a sinking ocean vessel, and in other places of like interest where people show excitement.

Women shriek and men utter exclamations.

As for myself, I feel a cold shudder permeate my whole system when I hear the startling declaration of the negro porter, and see the look of horror upon his black face.

Robert dead!

Good Heaven! how can such a thing have occurred? When last I saw him he was in good health. I witnessed him empty the vial of the poison, and although he mechanically put it back in his pocket, its contents had been drained through the basin's escape pipe. Then it seems out of the question that he can have taken any of the stuff.

I look at Acton, and he returns the glance, as if to say in words:

"What in the duse does this mean—have we been outwitted after all?"

Then both of us spring to our feet and press toward the center of the car.

I glance naturally in the direction of the honorable colonel and Evangeline. The girl acts her part

with amazing cleverness. Her face is pale, her eyes wide open with a look of horror, and she seems to be gasping—indeed, as we draw near them I hear her exclaim in what must be a piteous tone:

"Not dead! not dead! it cannot be—my poor, poor Robert. I will not believe it! No! no!"

As for the colonel, he seems to be wholly concerned with the girl, begging her to compose herself, and acting just as a solicitous father should over his dear child. Really those in the car, not in the secret, must feel very much for the couple.

A number have already crowded the narrow aisle where the porter still stands. There is the manager and actor, the commercial traveler, the gentleman from section six, who is with two Chicago ladies, the Englishmen, and last but not least, Acton and myself.

No hand is daring enough to drag aside the heavy curtains of the section until I grasp them and say to the porter:

"Unhook these, man."

Then I part them and thrust my head and shoulders into the berth. The broad glare of light falls upon Robert's face, for in attempting to arouse him, the porter has turned him upon his back. It looks white, but his eyes are shut, and this gives me an idea he is not yet dead.

I feel his head—it is cold.

Then I raise an arm; when I let it go, it falls like a stone.

Next I tear open his vest—he has kept it on—and place my hand over his heart. There is a little warmth here, but ah, so little, and I believe I can feel it faintly beat—just the softest throb in the world.

Another mystery confronts me—how came Robert Hammond in this condition, when, as I believe, I had removed all immediate danger from his path by inducing him to destroy the contents of that little vial?

Vague fancies flash through my mind in the minute of time that I stand there, bending over the almost lifeless man. I wonder if this plotter across the way, fearing lest the original plan might not turn out well, can have bent over Robert in the night and have given him some subtle poison to bring about this result?

It does not seem plausible that he would dare risk discovery; but then I cannot account for strange notions that may creep into my head at such a time.

I have just backed out of the berth—a number of anxious, horror-stricken faces are peering in since the porter has removed the curtains—when a loud voice exclaims:

"Stand back, please; I am a doctor!"

Ah! it is Samuels.

The Jew concerned in the game is now about to play his little part, according to the programme already arranged. I give way without a word, for I want to watch him.

A glance around, as I note Acton's absence, shows me that worthy in the seat with the nun. Perhaps she—Robert's sister—has fainted, and he has flown to her side. They seem to be eagerly talking now, however. I have no time to note more, my attention being riveted upon Doctor Samuels.

When he reaches the berth, he puts on a pair of glasses that give him even more of a learned look than ever. Then he gravely bends over the still

white form and examines the face, even opens the mouth.

It is a scene I shall never forget—the fast train booming along in a cloud of dust as we cross streets, the anxious minutes of the sleeper, and this venerable old rogue of an Israelite bending over poor Hammond.

Then I see him feel about the body, searching the vest-pockets. As I expect, he finds in one the empty vial that contained the opiate Robert Hammond did not take. Upon this he pounces with the eagerness shown by a cat when it discovers a mouse.

"Ah! now we have it, I think," he says.

Drawing the cork, he holds the vial to his nose, and smells of the odor; then, as if not fully satisfied, he places it on his tongue to taste of it, and it is really ridiculous to see the look of alarm on his face, and note the eagerness with which he cleanses his tongue.

"Gentlemen, I recognize all the symptoms of poisoning in this unfortunate young man, and here we have the means—arsenic. I have no doubt he has committed suicide, perhaps when out of his mind."

Those standing near, utter exclamations of horror and sympathy, while the wretched Evangeline, in the opposite section, carries on in quite a hysterical fashion.

"Is he dead?" asks one of the Englishmen.

"So near it that there is no hope. I will try and get something down his throat, but I assure you, gentlemen, it is quite useless."

Again he thrusts his long beard and head into the lower berth. I chance to look toward Acton, and catch a quick motion.

Obeying, I am instantly at his side.

"What does Samuels declare is the matter?" he asks.

"He says Mr. Hammond is dying—that he has taken arsenic in some liquid shape with the intention of committing suicide."

"Does he hold out any chance of saving him?"

"None."

"You and I know that is false, Mr. Craig. The Jew is simply carrying out his part of the agreement; but he does not suspect where the contents of the little vial went."

"But——" I begin, when Colonel Acton stops me short, for the puzzled look on my face tells him what I am about to say.

"You wonder what ails Robert. I can tell you."

This pleases me.

I have been dreadfully worried lest after all these plotting rascals have gotten the better of us, and something in the face of Acton tells me this is not so.

"I have been talking with Robert's sister about the matter, and she tells me he has been subject to a peculiar periodical fit of this kind ever since childhood. They are apt to come on about once a year, and then only after some period of great excitement.

"She says she has known him to lie in a state of coma, like one dead, and then to rise up from it as bright as a button, just as though the affair acted upon his mind and gave his brain a yearly clearing up.

"His case has been a source of wonder to physicians in a quiet way. His sister declares that one of those fits has come upon him during the night,

and that is so plausible a reason for his condition that I am fain to accept it."

On my part I grasp it eagerly.

I can see a good chance to beat the enemy at their own game. Quickly we decide what is to be done. Robert's sister, Therese, as she calls herself, has courage enough to act a part.

She will go forward, and claim the privilege of watching beside the sick man, as a Sister of Mercy or some such order.

Under such circumstances men will give way to any one seeming to possess some authority, and thus Therese can manage matters to suit herself.

There is no time to spare.

Ten minutes have glided away since the awful discovery of Robert's condition was made, and we are passing through the streets of Chicago, bound for the depot.

The sister glides forward, and announces to the few still gathered round the berth, that she will look after Robert—it is her duty.

There is a rush for satchels and bags, overcoats and packages of all sorts, for we are even now almost at the depot, and although this terrible incident has affected the travelers very much, they have their own affairs to think of.

Evangeline still carries on in a hysterical manner, and her father can only leave her a minute to speak to the nun. I chance to be in the near vicinity at the time, and hear him say, with deep feeling:

"Here is my card. I have written Palmer House on it. Wherever you have him taken, let me know positively. We are deeply interested in his condition. My child, you see, is almost out of her mind

over it—I did not dream he was so dear to her. You will post us, madam?"

The sister nods in reply, and Andrews turns away with a sigh of relief, as though he has accomplished his end.

"Chicago!" calls out the porter.

The train enters the depot.

Mr. Acton manages to whisper a few words to the nun, as he passes. Then the long line of vestibuled cars stops.

We have arrived on time to the minute.

Once outside, we hover around. A crowd soon collects, for the news goes abroad that a man has committed suicide on the Limited, and this is such an astonishing piece of intelligence that every railway employee in the building comes running up.

We see poor Robert carried out. The sister keeps close at his side. Outside a hack is secured, and into this the limp form of the young man and his attendant are placed.

Then it drives away.

Acton and I shake hands on the strange but acceptable solution of our trouble. All has been dark and gloomy before us—Robert himself, in his mad infatuation, was the stumbling block that gave us the most trouble; and now fortune has removed him temporarily.

The best part of it all is that his enemies do not dream but that what they state is the truth. They believe without the shadow of a doubt that Robert has swallowed the contents of the small vial of deadly arsenicum, and that probably before the charitable sister gets him to a hospital he will have stiffened out in death. What have they to fear?"

Suspicion can never alight on them.

Robert bought the deadly liquid, and has to all appearances administered it with his own hand. A plainer case could not be made out. That, of course, is the way they look at it. We see the matter in another light; people behind the scenes generally have a different conception of the stage performance, from the audience.

Fate, tired of aiding the conspirators of the Vestibule Limited, has played into our hands, and with such a good start it will indeed be strange if we cannot so manipulate the game as to bring their schemes to confusion.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

Colonel Acton and myself engage a hack and are taken to a small hotel not a great way from the Palmer House. While in the vehicle, we change our appearance greatly, so that the Jehu stares in amazement when he let us out, not recognizing the men he took up. A fare is as good from one man as another, with these fellows, and he pockets his money with a grin. As he drives away, I see him look back with curiosity.

We soon have a room, and presently go down to breakfast, discussing our business in low tones. I am no longer a Quaker, but present the appearance of a business man. Acton, on his part, pretends to be a commercial drummer, and I know from experience in the past how well he can play his part in that character, telling yarns, singing songs, and driving imaginary sharp trades with his customers.

After breakfast we sally forth.

Each has work cut out for the morning, and if fortune favors us we will make good headway against Robert's enemies.

Acton heads for the Palmer House, to learn what the adventurer and his daughter are doing, as the game must center around them.

On my part I make for the small hospital where Sister Therese was to take Robert.

It is not always easy to accomplish what you want in these places—they have much red tape

about them; but I imagine I know how to do the business if any one does.

As I near the institution, I glance around from my natural habit of caution, and it proves fortunate indeed that I do so. Close beside the door there stands a man I immediately recognize. It is the Jew doctor—Samuels.

I understand exactly how he came here, and the reason of his presence. He took a vehicle at the depot, and had it follow the hack containing Robert and the sister, with the design of finding out just where the dying man was taken.

As to his object, that is also manifest.

The sister has promised Andrews to let him know where Robert is, and his condition; but the adventurer is afraid lest she fail to do this, and Samuels is deputed to act the spy.

No doubt the Jew has been promised a snug sum when he can bring the news of Robert's death to his employer, and he is loitering around with the hope of hearing this fact, not daring to enter the building lest his true character as a charlatan be discovered.

I pass in.

A little management removes the difficulty at the entrance. It is wonderful how much can be accomplished by a tip, judiciously bestowed. I have seldom had trouble in doing just about as I wanted, when some austere guardian stood in the way. He might resent money thrown at him, but slipped confidingly into his hand wtih a few soft words, it makes him melt, and he is your friend.

Thus I am able to presently reach the cot where Robert lies. It is in a small room away from the

general ward. This has been accomplished by his sister, who pays for the privilege.

As I enter the room a physician is bending over the cot. No doubt Robert's condition puzzles him greatly, just as it has done others.

"Most remarkable," I hear him say, and then he asks a few questions.

Therese has seen me, and although not recognizing the Quaker in the smart-looking business man, I assure her of my identity by means of a signal already agreed on. The smile that flits over her pale but handsome face assures me that I am understood.

I am somewhat interested in this sister of Robert's, astonished at her sagacity, and pleased to see how well she plays her part. A New York society girl is she—well, I have had a very poor idea of these creatures in the past but must change it from this time on. Yes, Therese is a remarkable woman. Mentally, as she sits there conversing earnestly with the doctor, I compare her with the adventuress. The one fascinates as a rattlesnake might, the other draws out my admiration on account of her womanly qualities.

Then something else interests me. I find myself looking more and more closely at the doctor. He is a man of not more than thirty, with a full brown beard and a well-shaped head. There is something about him familiar to me, and yet I am puzzled. It cannot be possible, and still a thought will creep into my brain.

Ah! she speaks his name, and now I know I am right. Then the doctor turns as if to leave the room, which brings him face to face with me. He looks at me inquiringly.

I hold out my hand.

"Doctor Ranzy, I am glad to meet you again," I say, with a smile.

"Ah! you have the advantage of me," he replies, gravely.

"Tatters!"

The mere mention of this singular name causes his face to light up wonderfully. He steps forward and seizes my hand.

"Can it be possible I see my old friend Duncan Craig again? Yes, but how changed you are! I should never have known you."

"That is just it, my boy. You remember what my business is. I don't want people to know me. But how are you? What kind fortune has brought you to this hospital just now!"

"You knew I was a doctor, sir?"

"Yes, but it has been some time since I heard from you."

"The more shame to me, but I have long been hoping to run on and see you. I was appointed physician in charge of this hospital some months ago; so you see I am rising in the world. Your work paid, Mr. Craig."

Turning to the lady in nun's attire, he says:

"Miss Hammond, this is the best friend I have ever found in this world—a big-hearted man who took me out of the gutter as a boy, in New York, and gave me a start in the world. For sixteen years I have never let a day pass without calling down the blessings of Heaven upon the head of Duncan Craig."

"Hold on, doctor," I manage to say; "you give me too much credit. A boy with your spirit was sure to get along anyhow, and I happened to be the first

round of the ladder by means of which you were destined to mount upward. As to Miss Hammond, we have met before."

"Indeed!"

"I am concerned in her brother's welfare."

"Ah! you were on the Limited from New York—I see now."

"She has told you the facts?"

He bows toward the lady.

"Miss Hammond has been kind enough to explain it all to me. I received word that a young man had taken poison and was dying, and expressed my great surprise at his peculiar condition, when she was pleased to remove the vail of mystery. You need not fear but that the secret will be safe with me, and perhaps I may be in a condition to aid you."

I have no doubt of it, and thank the lucky accident that brings us together.

"I wish to talk with you in a few minutes, doctor," I remark.

"Very good, sir."

He turns to go, but I request that he wait for me.

"How is Robert?" I ask, of his sister.

"Just the same. He will lie like this for a period of from twelve to twenty hours, and then, unless I am mistaken, come out of it in his right mind."

"You are not concerned seriously about his condition, Miss Hammond?"

"I have seen him this way so often that, although it always gives me a shock, it does not alarm me."

I make a few inquiries, and then turn to the physician. He is such a fine-looking fellow, that my heart warms with the thought that I have been instrumental in making him what he is.

Together we leave the room, passing through the dormitory where a number of sufferers lie on cots, and are attended by prim-looking nurses, with black gowns, white aprons, and caps.

The doctor leads me to his private room.

Accident has thrown a chance in my way, and I do not mean to miss it.

When we are comfortably seated, I begin to tell the doctor the whole story. What he has heard from Miss Hammond has been only a fragment, but it has served to whet his curiosity, and he listens eagerly while I speak.

Once or twice he interrupts me to ask some question. It always concerns the medical part of the affair—how Robert acted—what appearance the wretched animal had after dying from the dose, and such things.

When I finish, the doctor bends over and seizes my hand which he squeezes heartily. I could make him wince with my grip, but I forbear, reserving that power for confidence men.

"This is a most remarkable case, Mr. Craig, and I am deeply interested. For your sake and also to benefit Robert's sister, I would be glad to have a hand in it if you would tell me how I can be of assistance."

I take him up on the spot, as it has always been a motto of mine to strike while the iron is hot.

"There is a chance for you to help us now, doctor."

"State it, please."

"You remember my speaking about a man calling himself Doctor Samuels?"

"Yes."

"He is outside the door."

"The rascal! What does he want?"

"He must have followed the hack containing Robert and his sister."

"Ah! I begin to comprehend. Then he hopes to hear of the young man's death."

"That is it, exactly."

"It is a pity we can't oblige him, Mr. Craig."

"Doctor, we must."

He rubs his hands together.

"You mean to deceive him?"

"Yes, let him believe Robert is dead, and he will carry the news to those people at the Palmer."

"But if I go and tell him this fact, his suspicions will be aroused."

"I do not mean to have you do anything of the sort. There are other ways of accomplishing the same thing."

"Ah! you were always fertile in expedients."

"Nonsense. It is my business. If it was a matter of surgery I am sure you would grasp it without trouble."

"True. What is the plan?"

"I will tell you. We must walk out together, and I will play the part of reporter for a daily paper, taking down some notes as you give them."

"Excellent."

"This Samuels will be close by, and his ears are long enough to catch all we say. You shall tell me about Robert; I will ask if he lived, and you declare he died just after being brought in."

"I will do it, Mr. Craig."

We talk a little longer. Of course, meeting "Tatters" in this singular way calls up many reminiscences of the past, and I would dearly love to talk about them; but this is not the time or place for such things.

We arrange to meet again and have a friendly chat; I am deeply interested in the doctor, and hope for his success in life. Judging the man from his past, I have no doubt that he will gain the topmost notch. The world needs such men in its ranks—they bring good with them wherever they come.

At last I rise to leave him.

As has been arranged, he accompanies me to the door, and passes outside, bare-headed. I have paper and pencil in my hand, and appear to be jotting things down in short-hand style.

CHAPTER XII.

HOODWINKED.

As I expect, the old Jewish doctor is standing near the entrance to the hospital. He has assumed an attitude as though waiting for a street car, upon seeing us approach.

We pay no attention to him, and, although he does not look toward us I can see him start as we speak, and turn his ear directly in our quarter, drinking in every word.

"Doctor, I am obliged to you for the information," I say, aloud, "it will make me a column of interesting matter, and, you know, we poor devils of newspaper men are paid by the amount of news we furnish. Is there anything more of a striking nature occurring here?"

"There's the case of the young man who took poison on the New York and Chicago Limited, arriving this A. M.," he replies.

"Ah! tell me about it, please."

I prepare to write, and while he speaks, do succeed in making many hieroglyphics upon my paper, though I imagine it would baffle the most intelligent short-hand correspondent to make head or tail of them. However, they serve the purpose for which they are intended, and deceive the listening doctor.

My friend goes on to tell me how the tragic event occurred on board the train, and what caused the Sister of Mercy to have the suffering man brought here.

He speaks of the kind fortune that caused such a friend for the suffering man to be near at hand.

I am greatly interested, and ask for the name of the parties. He can only supply that of Robert Hammond, but hints that there must be a warm attachment between the young man and the beautiful girl who carried on so in the Pullman sleeper when his condition was discovered.

"And how is the young man, doctor—will he recover?" I ask, finally—it is really amusing to see the listening Jew bend his head so that he may not lose a sound.

The doctor shakes his head.

"He is beyond recovery, Mr. Trott."

"What! the young man dead; then it is a 'Tragedy of the Limited express,' I must head it. When did he die, doctor?"

"Shortly after they brought him in," he replies, unblushingly; "after taking such a dose of deadly poison no man could live. I only wonder he held on to the vital spark so long, sir. A sad case, truly."

"Ah! we get used to them, doctor, you and I, in our business. We see a good deal of the rough side of life."

"True for you, Mr. Trott. There's many a case brought into this building piteous enough to wring a heart of stone. But familiarity breeds contempt, and we must do our duty always."

"I am a thousand times obliged, doctor."

"Not at all, sir. Always glad to serve members of the press. They are bound to get the news some way and I do not like to see medical facts distorted, you know."

"Glad to return the favor some day. Good-day, doctor," and I bow to him.

As I pass by the old Jew he turns, suddenly conceiving a notion.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but did the doctor say that young man brought here from the Limited express, was dead?" he asks, lifting his hat, politely.

I stop and look at him.

"That was what he said, sir. Any relation of yours, may I ask?" and the pencil is taken from my pocket.

The Jew shows alarm—the last thing he could wish would be to have his name published in connection with the tragedy.

"Oh! no, indeed, sir. I heard of the case, and was interested—that is all," he replies.

"Oh! I was in hopes you might throw some light on the affair. It is such a deep mystery, you know, we would welcome facts."

"I know nothing."

With which remark he hastens down the street. Looking around once or twice, and seeing me apparently following him, he quickens his pace almost to a run, and reaching a street where a car is just passing, swings himself aboard.

No doubt he believes himself safe from pursuit now, and so he may be for the present, but if I had anything to gain by it, I am positive I could put my hand on the Jew within half an hour. All that would be necessary would be for me to visit the great caravansary on State street, and ask to be shown to the suite of elegant apartments occupied by the English colonel, Larz Andrews, and his daughter.

That is where the fellow is making for with all the speed that Chicago's south-side cable road can take him.

I know full well, however, that my employer will look after that end of the line with benefit, so I do not worry at all, but proceed to the little hotel where we are registered under fictitious names.

It is now nearly noon.

The bracing fall air makes a man feel particularly good, and I am free to confess that I never appeared in better health in my life, despite the long journey just ended, and the events of the preceding night.

Just at noon, Acton comes in.

I see a little cloud on his face.

He asks me how I get on, and I make a concise report. My success pleases him somewhat, for which I am glad.

"Now I'll tell you what I have done, Craig. It was no trouble—hand me a match, please, to light up this cigar, which was given to me by Colonel Andrews himself—as I said, it was no trouble to find where they held out—the names were on the register.

"Singularly enough, I chose the same method as yourself for gaining my end; I pretended to be the ever-present newspaper reporter, who, like charity, covers a multitude of sins."

At this I laugh—the colonel goes on.

I was about to send up a card requesting an interview, when I espied the object of my solicitude coming down the stairs.

"'Is that Colonel Andrews?' I asked the clerk, and he replied in the affirmative.

"Then I approached him, stated that I was a reporter for the *News*, that it was mentioned he knew something about the terrible event of the Vestibule Limited, and that as all sorts of stories would soon be afloat, he would be wise to give me the true facts

of the case, so that he would not be misrepresented in the matter.

"He seemed to have already made up his mind what to do in such an emergency, for without hesitation he took me into a corner of the reading-room where we would not be interrupted, and told me all—that is, all he desired the public to know.

"Finally, he said something like this:

"'I always thought well of young Hammond, and will be grieved to hear of his death; but I never, never dreamed of the truth until my poor child, in her anguish of spirit, told me in her room up stairs that Robert and she were secretly married in New York. She showed me documents to prove it—the marriage certificate, his will, made before we left New York, as though he half suspected that harm would come to him, and desired to protect her.'

"Of course I pretended that this was mighty fine news for me and assured the old villain that I would do him justice in my account of the sad affair. He was very genial, wanted me to remain and take dinner, but I had other work to do, and declined.

"As I left him, I saw some one take my place in the chair, and recognized the Jewish doctor. After hearing your account it is easy to understand that he came to make his report.

"Now, Craig, you are a handy man with a pen; I want you to write me up a little account of the affair, calculated to tell the truth and yet please Andrews. Wind it up by saying that a report has just been received that the young man died in the hospital."

"What is it for?"

"Publication in the *News*, that sparkling little sheet Stone gets out."

"But it will all be denied in the morning papers," I venture.

"Not so, for several reasons. In the first place your friend, the doctor, has given orders that no news shall be given out concerning Robert—that if any one asks he is to be told the young man is dead."

"That is true—I had forgotten."

"Then again, Craig, I used to be a newspaper man in my day, although more of a manager than a reporter or editor. I am known among the fraternity. I shall drop around and see them all, and ask if they will promise to avoid all mention of the young man, beyond the account given in to-day's *News*."

"Good!" I exclaim, "that will fix it."

"We only want to keep Andrews in ignorance a short time, until we can concoct a plan to paralyze the man and his clique. By the way, I met Billings."

"He is still on deck, then?"

"Yes, and in the same character—stops at the Palmer, too. You know he promised not to show his hand in the game until we had given the word."

"Very considerate of the sergeant, too."

"Oh! well, you know a day or two doesn't matter with him. They've led him a long chase as it is. Besides, Billings is a wily old chap—I suspect he's up to the monkey and chestnut business with us."

"The duse you say."

"If we arrest this couple on some specific charge, such as attempted murder, he can have a chance to search their luggage for what he is after. As it is he is not sure they have it, and dares take no bold step without that certainty."

"I see. Well, Billings is a fine fellow, and if we can do him a good turn without much effort it will pay. Besides, we may yet find a chance to make him useful."

"That is just my idea to a dot. I learned something from him to-day. You remember he said this girl had married a lord over there, and got away with some valuables, when she found his family would never recognize her?"

"Yes."

"Well, that English lord is in Chicago—as I learned after leaving Billings—he is waiting for some friends; I believe they are the two sportsmen who came on with us."

"They recognized the girl—one had been victimized by her to the tune of fifty pounds, but I did not hear either of them refer to her having deluded a young lord into marriage."

"Oh! that part of it was kept very quiet, Billings informs me. The English public know nothing about it. A liberal expenditure of gold will accomplish wonders over there as well as here. But it is a fact, all the same, and the gentleman is in Chicago, though Andrews and his supposed daughter do not dream of such a volcano slumbering under their feet."

I begin to see great possibilities in this thing.

It even looks as though the threads of the story were being drawn together with a master-hand, far above any puny effort of our own, and that the grand finale will soon take place in a great blaze of light that must mark the downfall of villainy. Yes, all the world's a stage, and queer plays are being acted every day, with real characters going through their parts. Too often, alas, vice triumphs,

so far as mortal eyes can see, but the final victory may be beyond our ken. Now and again the drama is brought to a legitimate conclusion, and it is our intention to work the levers so that this case may be one of the few.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE PALMER HOUSE.

I wonder, while looking at my employer and friend, what it is that troubles him. Accustomed to reading the signs on the human face I am positive that he has found something to worry about, but I do not care to speak of it. If it concerns me he will mention it, surely.

"Do you know where this English lord is stopping in Chicago?" I ask, as a thought occurs to me.

He observes me soberly.

"No, but I imagine you would be apt to strike him at the Palmer. Nearly all of them stop there, you know. Besides, unless I am mistaken, I had a glimpse of one of our friends of the train, in the rotunda."

"I'll make a note of it, sir. I imagine we may have trouble with Robert even after he comes to his senses. If we could get this gentleman to accidentally make his acquaintance, and in the course of things show the photograph Billings has, an explanation would follow that must turn Robert's love to contempt. As long as he believes Evangeline to be an angel, we cannot hope to bring about a rupture, but once let that idea be dissipated, and we'll have no trouble. A man like Robert Hammond will cling to a good woman through thick and thin, but he will have no respect for an adventuress, who perjures herself with every caress she gives him, and finally attempts to take his life."

Acton nods his head.

"What you say is good sound sense, my boy, and I don't see any better plan ahead than to follow out one laid down on the lines suggested by your thought."

This is praise indeed from the colonel, who is generally very chary about such things; but we have fought side by side in the heat of the day, and borne the burdens of life together for years, so we understand one another pretty thoroughly.

I sit down to write out a short and fitting article, giving a graphic account of the scene on board the famous Vestibule Limited, just before it reaches Chicago. When this is done, I hand it to Acton who suggests one or two slight changes, which are soon made. I end the account with the laconic remark:

"The young man was taken to a hospital, and, it is reported, died soon after arriving."

Such an account as this must certainly please Andrews. No doubt the Jew doctor has told him all about his meeting a reporter at the hospital, and magnified the importance of the interview that took place between the head surgeon and myself; so the schemers will be looking for the issue of the afternoon paper containing the account.

Taking the article with him Acton posts over to the publication office of the *News*, and knowing the man as I do, I have no doubt but that he will succeed in getting it inserted. Then he has another task before him in visiting the offices of the *Times*, *Tribune*, and *Inter-Ocean*. Whether he will also be successful in these places is of course a problem; but I do not fear. Colonel Acton is a wonderful man, and has a knack of accomplishing about all

that he ever attempts—in fact, I never knew him to fail yet.

Left to myself I saunter forth.

There is no reason why I should not set the ball in motion at once, and I am sorry I did not learn the name of the young Englishman from Acton. However, I make my way to the Palmer House to see what can be picked up.

It is a big place, where the artery of life throbs unceasingly; people come and go, but there is always a crowd.

I delight in watching the faces of men and speculating upon their business, but just now I have other cares that engross my attention.

Before long my search is rewarded. I see some one I know.

Pushing forward I touch the horse fancier upon the arm; he turns and looks at me, then frowns.

"Well, sir, what do you want?" he asks.

"A few words in private. I have something of importance to tell you."

His face speaks of his surprise.

"The duse you say. Anything connected with the Chicago Jockey Club?"

By this time I have led him off to a retired nook.

"No, it is about Ann Reilly."

"Confusion! Craig, this is a beastly shame, to come it over me."

I shrug my shoulders at his reproaches, and protest that I have not intentionally deceived him. Then, without further delay, I plunge into the subject that brought me here.

"Sergeant Billings, I understand that the gentleman whose family has employed you on this case—

the young lord whom this pretty adventuress married in England, is in Chicago."

"What! Lord Arthur here?" he exclaims.

"You didn't know it, then?"

"Not I; but it would not be strange, for he is in America, and people drift to Chicago here as they do to Paris over the water."

"You have perfect confidence in me, sergeant?" I ask seriously.

He looks amused.

"What a question, Craig."

"I mean it. Would you be willing to trust something with me for a short time—something you value highly?"

"Jupiter Ammon! what do you mean?"

"The photograph of Ann Reilly and the papers relating to her escapade across the water, the marriage certificate, and clippings giving a portion of her life."

This time he frowns a little, but smiles in a good-natured way immediately after.

"Ah! what would you do with them?"

"Save Robert Hammond from the clutches of that beautiful she-fiend, and the devil's league she has around her."

"Your purpose is a noble one, Craig, and the papers could not be used to a better advantage; but before I say yes, positively, I would like to hear just how you intend to make use of them."

"Through Lord Arthur, probably."

"The duse you say!"

"Have you any objections to their resting temporarily in his hands?"

"Oh! no. He has long since been cured of his

passion for this beauty and is as anxious as his relatives to have the marriage annulled."

"Then you agree?"

"On condition that nothing is lost. Of course the papers could be restored again, as we have a list of the files from which they were taken; but that is quite a job. Promise me you will place every safeguard around them, Craig."

I do this readily.

The papers, together with the photograph, will be of immense value to me in this case. Through them I expect to convince Robert, in the first place, of the worthlessness of his charmer—to open his eyes to the fact that he is but one of her many victims.

If I can only succeed in doing this, I believe the young man may be saved against himself. It is a difficult and thankless task, that I have assumed, and I shall need every assistance possible. Sergeant Billings finally hands me over a small package, and after some further talk I leave him. Seeking a chance in the reading-room of the hotel, I open the envelope secured with rubber bands. Inside I find some newspaper clippings and a photograph.

This latter, of course, engages my attention at once, and I gaze with considerable interest upon the features of that beautiful siren. There can be no mistake—two such faces do not exist upon the earth.

On the back I find printed:

"Ann Reilly, *alias* Gwendoline Larrimore, *alias* Marguerite Hemenway, *alias* Avis Moore, etc.; age eighteen; May, 188—. London. Successful confidence operator."

That is enough in itself to tell the story.

What will Robert say? I only hope that he will

have recovered so much of his mind after the shock that has prostrated him as to be in a more sensible state than ever.

The newspaper clippings I glance over, and discover that this girl has created quite a panic among the good families of Great Britain, turning the heads of all the young scions, and having a great time of it.

All of which would prove interesting reading to me when I had leisure, but just now I merely glance over the accounts in order to glean their significance.

Having put the packet carefully away in my inner coat-pocket, I remember the mission that brought me here. Is Lord Arthur stopping at the Palmer?

My next task is to glance over the register and see if that will give me a clew. Possibly he may not have registered under his own name, for some of these English lords are made such victims of swindlers that they prefer to travel *incog*, through the States, especially when over here sight-seeing or for sport.

Presently, I discover the names of two English gentlemen, as they have signed London, and the time of their arrival agreeing with the coming of the New York Limited, I have no doubt that they are the same gentlemen of the El Dorado.

Glancing back still farther I find the name I seek —Arthur Trevellion—London.

Turning to one of the clerks, I ask:

"Is Mr. Trevellion here still?"

He replies in the affirmative.

"I would like to see him if he is in."

"Write your name on a card, please," returns the

clerk, glancing toward the key-rack, and finding the one belonging to his room missing.

"Certainly."

Upon a card, with ink, I write my name, and underneath the words:

"Desire to see you with reference to the Reilly affair."

Then handing it to the clerk, I say:

"Send that up to Mr. Trevellion, please."

I have no doubt he will see me, for just at present he is deeply interested in the matter I have mentioned. As he is a young man I have some hopes of his helping me.

Still, it is a toss up as to whether he will be willing to do it, for fear of getting into a scrape of some kind, such as will compel him to appear in court.

I hope for the best.

If he agrees to aid me, Robert can be saved, I am certain. Should he refuse, I must change my plans, that is all.

While waiting, Sergeant Billings chances to pass near me, and I call him over to tell him of my discovery. He is pleased to know Lord Arthur is under the same roof, and puts me up to a nice little wrinkle, which repays me for telling him the facts.

If the young Englishman will help me, I promise to do my best to assist Billings in his endeavor to get the papers from the girl. She is his wife until the English courts have annulled the marriage, and hence cannot be openly prosecuted. Now that she has deliberately married Robert, she can be indicted for bigamy, though I doubt whether a jury of men will ever convict her—if we could have women on the panel, her punishment would come swiftly.

Ah! the clerk is calling me.

"The messenger boy will show you up to Mr. Trevellion's apartments."

Very good!

I shake hands with the officer from Scotland Yard, and follow the lad up a flight of stairs. He shows me a door and vanishes even as I give a rap upon the panel.

CHAPTER XIV.

LORD ARTHUR TAKES A HAND.

"Enter!" sings out a voice, and there is something I like about it, something cheering and boyish.

I open the door and step into the room.

The first person I set eyes on is one of the two gentlemen who were on the Limited. Then I notice that there are three parties in the room, one of whom is the other sportsman.

Lord Arthur himself is a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, with a boyish face, far from handsome, but pleasing to me, nevertheless.

His suite of apartments is one of the finest in the great caravansary, as my first glance tells me.

All of them look at me strangely. Perhaps they have expected to see an English detective, and do not yet understand.

"Am I right in believing this is Lord Arthur Trevellion?" I ask, addressing the tall young man.

He nods his head.

"May I ask if these gentlemen are acquainted with the matter, my lord?"

"Yes, I have just been discussing it with them. They have been traveling for some time, and had not heard of the mess I got into. What is your business with me, sir?"

"Did you know Ann Reilly was in Chicago, my lord?"

"My friends have just informed me that some one

resembling her very much had arrived here. Do you mean to say she is seeking me?"

"Hardly. With her present game in view, you are probably the last person she would wish to set eyes on. These gentlemen have seen me before but do not recognize me."

With that the others glance toward each other, and shake their heads.

"I came to Chicago in the same car with you, gentlemen. You remember the Quaker?"

At this they both nod and smile.

"Then you saw the tragedy they told me about?" remarks the young lord.

"Yes, and it is in connection with that same affair that I am here. Probably you have heard that the young man whom they suppose committed suicide was very friendly with the adventuress, Evangeline, as she calls herself?"

He nods.

"In confidence, gentlemen, I am about to tell you that which if once known to the daily press would ruin our case, so I beg that you will not repeat it.

"The young man received the vial of poison from the hand of Evangeline herself, on the previous night, with the declaration that it was a narcotic that would bring him sweet sleep—a love potion as it were."

At this my three hearers utter various exclamations of horror.

"A beautiful fiend!" I hear Trevellion mutter.

"That young man's name is Robert Hammond——"

"Of New York ?" asks my lord, suddenly.

"Yes, sir. Do you know him?"

"Quite well. Two years ago Bob and I hunted

elephants together in Southern Africa. And that wretched girl has murdered him."

"Softly, my lord. She thinks he is dead, but thanks to good fortune, Robert Hammond is in a fair way to hunt in your company at some future time."

They are all deeply interested.

In all the course of human events such tragic stories are not run across every day.

"I beg pardon," says my lord, "but why does this girl desire Bob's death—what has he been guilty of, pray?"

"The terrible crime of madly worshiping that Delilah. She is after his money."

"Of course."

"To get it she married him in New York, unbeknown to her father."

At this the three smile broadly.

"Just before leaving on this trip he made his will, leaving all to her."

"Why, he must be a fool!"

"Hold on, Bartley, remember I'm in as bad a box. That girl can make a fool out of the wisest of men. Poor Bob!" exclaims Trevellion.

Then I proceed with the narrative, telling how Robert bought the poison, and all that happened in the sleeping-car.

My auditors are spell-bound when I relate my interview with Robert, and the incident of the Maltese cat. I give it in as dramatic a manner as the circumstances allow, for it is my design to interest them all I can in the case, in order to gain my lord's co-operation. Finally I have told all.

One after another the gentlemen shake my hand.

"You are not a Yankee, Mr. Craig?" says one.

"A Scotch-American, sir. I was born over here, but my parents were both Edinburgh people," and when I tell them of my connections their respect increases.

"Mr. Craig, what is your object in seeking this interview?"

"My lord, you say Robert was your friend. Do you still count him as such?"

"Certainly. And if your mission here is to solicit my assistance in doing him a good turn, there is no need of putting the question. Count on me heart and soul."

"Ah! I knew when I set eyes on you that such would be the answer," I declare.

"Why, I owe my life to Robert Hammond. But for his courage an old rogue elephant would have killed me. I can never forget that."

I take out the packet.

"My lord, you may not know that the man in your employ, who is tracking these people, is in this hotel at present."

"Who—Billings?"

"Sergeant Billings. I had met him before in London. He believes that by getting these people in a corner with Robert's case he will be able to make terms on account of the other, and hence is disposed to assist me."

"Quite right, quite right. I'd trust Billings anywhere. He has a long head."

"He allowed me to have these documents to hand to you. You understand what they are of course."

He flushes a little at sight of them, and then gives a short laugh.

"Yes, I reckon I do, Mr. Craig. Ah! here is her deceitful face."

I can see certain emotions chasing each other over his countenance as he gazes at it, and do not wonder. Whether these mean anger or something else, it is hard to say.

"Ah! she made a fool of me, and I tell you there are few men who could resist that girl once she exercised her charms. But the spell was broken, and that ends it. Mr. Craig, explain how I can serve you," says my lord.

So I tell him my plan—how I want him to see Robert again and casually mention the trouble he has had on account of a girl in England, whom he married. Then, at the proper moment, he is to produce the picture, and add all the proofs, thus convincing Hammond that the Evangeline he believes in is as false as Jezebel.

I believe solemnly that such a course will be the only way of effecting a cure with Robert.

Generally, when a patient suffers with fever added to some other malady, the physician, before devoting his energies toward curing the ailment, will break the fever.

So with Hammond—he must see his folly before we can hope to cure him of the mad disease of the heart from which he suffers.

The three gentlemen agree with me that such is the only true course. Trevellion asks questions relative to Robert's present position, and I give him directions by means of which he may find the hospital.

"You must be careful, sir, how you show yourself in the dining-room," I remark.

"Is Gwendoline here?" he asks, holding his breath and changing color.

"On the same floor with yourself. They have a suite of apartments here."

He looks a trifle uneasy, and I am not quite so positive that he would be able to trust himself alone with the charmer again. That old fascination had deep roots, and even though the tree may have been cut down, they are liable to send out shoots again.

Hence, I earnestly trust he will not be thrown in the company of the pretty woman who is really his wife, at least until Robert has been saved.

He promises to be very careful, and avoid her. As he wears no mustache or side-whiskers now, she may not recognize him should they casually pass on the street.

Satisfied that my case is in good hands, I bid the gentlemen good-day, and withdraw. All has gone well, and I am pleased with the progress thus far.

Once let the Englishman convince Robert that the woman he believes in has lived the life of a base adventuress, preying upon the community, and he will be ready to believe all the rest concerning the attempt upon his own existence, a portion of which is already known to him, through me.

Down below, near the desk, I see Billings.

The Scotland Yard detective is evidently waiting for some one, for he watches the stairs and the elevator quietly but thoroughly.

I know I am in his thoughts, for a smile appears upon his face when he sees me.

"Well, what luck?" he asks.

"The best."

"He has accepted the mission?"

"Gladly. He and Robert are old chums."

"The duse you say!"

"Hunted together in South Africa."

"Ah! he was in that party, eh? They had some hot times and came near embroiling her majesty's government in a war with the natives. Well, that made it much easier for you."

"Yes, indeed. I think my plan will be a success now. A few more hours and Robert will have come to his senses. When that time arrives I shall be summoned, and then my cards may be played."

"Anything I can do for you, command me," he says, earnestly.

I do not know of any use I can put him to, just at present, but something may turn up, and I tell him so.

Then I find it time to return to my room.

Acton comes in soon after I arrive. He has succeeded in his undertaking, and met with all possible courtesy from the newspaper men whom he went to interview.

He is anxious to hear what I have been up to, and listens to my story with an eagerness that is almost painful.

At its conclusion he slaps me on the back with his old time vigor, saying:

"Shake, Craig, old fellow. You are the man for me. We are bound to succeed now."

Evidently, the colonel is satised with the arrangement I have made. It does one good to feel that his work is appreciated, and serves as a spur to urge on the weary toiler to still greater deeds.

The afternoon is rapidly passing, and ere long night will fall upon the Lake City. I am patiently waiting a message from Therese. When Robert comes back into his own mind she is to let me know.

It is not strange—this absence of news, for she told me he has at times lain in this stupor for twenty hours. As twelve have hardly passed, I have no reason to be anxious, and yet naturally I feel so.

I am just looking at my watch, yawning as I note the fact that it is four o'clock when there is a rap at our door.

"Hello!" cries the colonel, starting out of a doze.

"Come in!" I call aloud.

The door opens and a man appears.

"A note for Mr. Craig," he says.

CHAPTER XV.

HEROIC MEASURES.

Of course I know that in all probability this is news of Robert, and yet I cannot help saying:

"Are you from the hospital?"

He answers in the affirmative.

I open the note with a little uneasiness—what if I should read of Robert's death—such a thing might happen under the circumstances.

"Come—he is recovering—Therese."

That is all.

I draw a breath of relief.

"No answer, my man," I remark, rising.

He turns and leaves the room with something of a military salute.

"That fellow's been in the army. What news, Craig?" asks the colonel.

I hand him the slip of paper, and proceed to draw on my light overcoat. The air of Chicago becomes exceedingly chilly at this time of year, particularly as night draws nigh.

A few words and I am off, heading for the distant hospital on the South-Side. The cable cars are put into good use to transport me on my way, and as I ride I reflect, reviewing the whole case.

If Robert can only be managed properly, we may readily set up a game by means of which the adventurer and his daughter will be brought low.

I have stopped at the Palmer on the way and sent

up a note to the Englishman, requesting him to meet me at the door of the hospital at a certain time, and I know he will be there.

Arriving finally at my destination I enter and meet the doctor in his office. Exchanging a few sentences with him, I pass on.

Robert is up and dressed.

He looks a little pale, but otherwise does not seem to have suffered any ill effects from his recent attack. Of course he glances at me without interest, but Therese tells him who I am, and a smile crosses his face as he holds out his hand.

"Glad to see you out of that mess, sir. It gave us all a great shock," I remark.

"Ah! yes, and no doubt your first thought was to the effect that I had gone the same way as that wretched cat," he replies.

"Until your sister here gave me a clew, such was my impression. You can believe it sent a cold shiver through my system."

"Do you know where—they are?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does she—do they believe—have they been here to inquire?"

"No, sir. They believe you dead."

"Good Heaven! how is that?"

"It was so reported in the evening papers."

"That must have been a cruel blow to her."

"Very," I say dryly, with a grimace in the direction of Miss Therese, who smiles.

"I must find them and relieve her agony."

Of course this is nothing more nor less than I have expected, but it worries me; he is so dead set in his ways, there can be no telling where he will land when he jumps.

"I beg that you will not do that yet. Remember, that man and his clique mean to have your life, and it would be folly for you to throw it away. You gave in to me before, and it saved your life. Promise me one thing."

"What is that?" he asks.

"That you will not attempt to see Gwendoline—I mean Evangeline, until morning."

"Oh! I can promise that. Therese and I are just about to head for a hotel, as soon as the doctor gives me permission to leave here, as I find that is necessary."

"What hotel do you go to?" I ask, with some little uneasiness.

"The Palmer, of course!"

I say nothing, but earnestly hope that as all the characters in this life drama are domiciled beneath the roof of a single hotel, there may be no disastrous meeting before the affair is ripe.

We talk a few minutes longer.

"Pardon me if I speak a few words privately to your sister, Mr. Hammond," I say.

"Certainly. Talk as long as you please. I only hope my release will come shortly. I need a good dinner and a cigar," he answers.

I tell Therese about Lord Arthur and what to do. They are to stop in and have dinner before reaching the Palmer, which will keep both men from appearing in the dining-room of the hotel, and running the risk of discovery; for should the pretty adventuress see her English husband hob-nobbing with her American one, she might readily guess what disaster had befallen her fortunes, and by flight manage to save something out of the ruin.

Therese understands—she is a bright girl, and

again I mentally compare her with the one whose pretty face has well nigh wrecked the lives of these two good men. The comparison redounds to the advantage of Robert's sister.

Having given her all the instructions that I deem necessary, I shake Robert's hand and tell him I will speak to the doctor as I pass out; that he is a sort of *protege* of mine and will do anything to favor me, so that in a few minutes they will be allowed to square their account and leave.

This I do, and the doctor readily acquiesces.

In five minutes or so Robert will once more be breathing the pure air of heaven, or at least what they call such in smoky Chicago.

Outside, just as I expect and hope, I discover the Englishman. There is only time to speak a few words with him, and then I make myself scarce, though hovering near.

Presently, voices are heard beyond the door, and Trevellion mounts the steps, meeting Robert and his sister coming out.

He plays his part well, simulating surprise, and exclaiming:

"Bless my soul, Hammond, can it be possible!"

As for Robert he is delighted.

He seizes the other's hand and wrings it with great vigor. Then he presents Therese. I can see the Englishman glance at her curiously, and somehow the thought flashes into my brain that he must surely be attracted by her sweet, gentle face and womanly ways.

They chat a few moments and then start down the street together. Therese has changed her attire to a certain extent—she is dressed in black, but no longer passes as a nun.

On my part I have also succeeded in altering my appearance, and do not believe any of them will recognize me, unless I give my lord the signal agreed on between us. A few simple changes have done it, the principal one being the use of a pair of blue spectacles. Strange what an alteration they will make in a man's looks.

It is easy for me to follow close behind the trio. I am not noticed, at least by Robert who seems to have brightened up wonderfully under the unexpected meeting with his old hunting comrade. They indulge in many reminiscences and Therese also joins them, apparently pleased to see her brother exhibiting such signs of his old self.

Presently they reach a large restaurant.

Darkness is closing in, and pleasing odors are wafted forth from the eating place.

My lord stops—he invites them in to dine—Robert makes a feeble protest, wishing to wait until they reach the hotel, but he is almost famished, and the appetizing odors that reach him are hard to resist.

Of course they enter.

Two minutes later a quiet man, wearing blue glasses, and with his heavy hair thrown back *a la* professor, takes a seat at a table near by. That is myself, of course. It is my desire to see how the thing works; not through simple curiosity alone, but because I have a deep interest in the affair.

When Trevellion glances toward me I give him the signal and he smiles. Really, I believe his lordship enjoys the game. It is about as good as hunting the royal Bengal tiger in the jungles of India, at any rate, for his quarry here is worth the effort.

They chat for a time, and no mention is made of the subject. Robert must be allowed a chance to

appease his hunger, for he will need all his strength to carry him through. Luckily the Englishman seems to recognize this fact.

At length the time arrives; operations are opened on the enemy's works.

"Tell me, what have you been doing since I parted from you in Natal," says Robert.

His friend turns red in the face—he is a little ashamed to confess his faults in the presence of Therese; but he has promised, and like a true Briton, does not go back on his word.

"I've been at home a good part of the time, and unfortunately got mixed up in an affair that has caused my family no end of worry. To tell you the truth, old fellow, I fell head over ears in love with a pretty face, became fascinated, and married the girl!"

Robert looks uneasy, as this strikes him in a tender spot; but he laughs it off.

"Well, your news is surprising, Arthur. So, you are a Benedict?" he says.

"Unfortunately, yes, but I have reason to believe the courts will soon annul the marriage and set me free," replies Trevellion.

"Ah! then the lady did not turn out all that your fancy painted her."

"She proved to be a beautiful adventuress. I have documents with me relating a dozen episodes of her life, taken from the papers, and also a very good picture of her as she appeared a year ago. But I trust I may never again see her face in this world."

"Did she not love you, Arthur?"

"Love! Such a creature is incapable of the tender passion. She lavished caresses upon me, and half an hour later was coolly plotting my death with an

accomplice, having succeeded in getting me to make a will that left her all my property in case of death."

"Ah!"

Robert turns so white that I almost fear he is about to fall from his chair; but with a supreme effort he recovers.

"I am not quite myself yet," he apologizes, with a poor attempt at smiling; "what were you saying, Arthur—she tried to poison you?"

"Yes, but her tool weakened and changed the glass, giving me a clean one. Afterward he confessed on condition that I would not harm Gwendoline, and I promised; but it opened my eyes and I saw the beautiful fiend in all her hideousness. I was cured of my folly then and there."

Robert is staggered by the similarity of the two cases. He seems uneasy.

"Arthur, you spoke of having a picture of your wife with you," he says, just as I fully expect.

"Yes," returns the other, quietly.

"Would you mind letting me see it? I have reasons for asking.

"Not at all, my dear boy. Impress it well on your mind, for it is the face of a deceiver, and woe betide the man who falls down before it to worship. I am not her only victim."

With that he slowly draws out the packet, and selecting the picture, holds it face downward as he hands it to Robert.

I catch my breath and trust young Hammond will not make a scene. The others are watching him, Arthur eagerly, Therese anxiously.

He turns it over.

The beautiful face stares at him—it mocks his de-

spair. Not a sound breaks from him, but his lips grow white again, and the awful look in his staring eyes tells of his suffering. Yes, it is a painful remedy, but desperate cases require heroic treatment, and surely the knife of the surgeon is used in mercy.

A full minute elapses ere he speaks; a minute of intense anxiety to all.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPELL BROKEN.

Finally Robert remarks:

"Did I understand you to say this is a picture of your wife, Arthur?"

"You did."

"There is no mistake—you have not given me the wrong photograph?" holding it up.

"That is my wife's picture."

"Her name?"

"Is Ann Reilly—but to me she was Gwendoline, to others Avis, Evangeline or one of a dozen names she carried in stock."

"And you married her?"

"Yes, the more fool I."

"And she tried to poison you after getting you to make your will?"

"Every word of it is true."

Robert lapses into silence for a minute or so, and none of the rest speak. We realize what a whirlwind of emotions must be raging in his breast, and it is better that he fight the battle alone—the victory will then be more enduring.

At length he again looks up.

"Arthur!"

"What is it, Robert?"

"Do you know whether she—your wife—the adventuress—came over—to America?"

"I am sure of it. A detective belonging to Scot-

land Yard and in my employ is following them, and I know he is in Chicago to-night."

Robert groans.

He has endeavored to discover the faintest gleam of light, but without success. All around him lies the blackness of despair.

"There can be no doubt then, Arthur, that I have fallen into the toils of the same pretty schemer who wrecked your happiness."

Lord Arthur pretends to be surprised, and induces Robert to give him his confidence. As the latter has no other support to lean upon he makes a clean beast of it, and tells all.

My Englishman does his part well, and impresses upon Robert's mind the enormity of the woman's offense, until he has aroused a feeling of hatred and disgust in place of the love that has lately reigned there.

I am not so sure of Robert. Man is proverbially weak when love once pleads admission to the heart. Stern as is his purpose now, I am afraid he will melt if that lovely Circe ever gets her arms around his neck, and with streaming eyes declares to Robert that although she has sinned in the past, he is the only man she has ever loved.

If we are wise we will endeavor to keep Robert away from the charmer at present, until he recovers himself.

Again and again Robert glances at the photograph he holds, as though he seems to have a lingering hope that he may discover some little peg on which he can rest a doubt; but it is useless.

Chancing to turn it over, he sees what has been printed on the back, and shudders while he reads the indictment.

"What does this mean—who put it there?"

"The British Government."

"I don't understand."

"It is her decree of banishment from Great Britain. These cards were circulated in every city. She tried to brazen it out for a while, but the exposure was too much for her, and she went. In the States she was not known, so she came here to play the same game."

Robert hands the picture back, shuddering as it leaves his hands.

"It is over!" he says, shutting his lips together with some show of firmness.

"You have cast her out, Robert?" asks my lord.

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven!" breathes Therese.

Lord Arthur does not look so fully satisfied, but gazes at his friend in a queer manner. He has been seriously bitten himself, but nothing like Robert, and knowing what a hard time he had in trying to give this girl up, he understands just what is before his friend.

Robert is filled with the fervor of the moment, and raises his head proudly as though he has just won a great victory.

If the opportunity ever presents itself, I am afraid he will discover how weak human nature is under certain conditions.

At any rate our plans have at least succeeded as well as we ever dreamed they would, Robert has had his eyes opened, and no matter what occurs in the future he cannot enter into it blindfolded. He knows his Evangeline is an adventuress who has deceived many a man before him—that his idol instead of being pure gold is dross, and if he still

worships, it must be at a sacrifice to his better nature.

I hear them ask him what he intends to do, and I am pleased to catch his reply.

"I am in the hands of my friends. Therese here and the detective she has employed, a Mr. Craig, can advise me," he says.

With that I get up and go out.

Changing my disguise I once more enter the restaurant, and express surprise at finding them there. They gradually put me in possession of the fact that Robert has discovered the true nature of the adventuress, and is entirely cured of his folly. He says this latter himself, and looks so stern and severe that I can hardly refrain from smiling.

Poor fellow! his fortress may seem impregnable in his eyes, but I know full well that one killing look from those roguish eyes will create havoc there, and that only a brief bombardment will cause the white flag to be run up in token of surrender.

It suits my plans well enough to know that Robert means to give her up, and I feel that every hour that passes will strengthen my case.

The next thing to be done is to get Robert and his sister into the Palmer House, and assigned to rooms as brother and sister, under false names.

When that has been accomplished I must see Colonel Acton, and arrange our business for a descent upon the swindles. In this game we will be glad to have the assistance of Billings. Besides, there is Lord Arthur and his two sporting friends, ready to be made use of. In private I speak to the Englishman, and tell him just what I think. He jumps at the hint I let fall, and immediately insists on Robert promising to join himself and friends in

the grand hunt they are preparing for. This is something Robert can never resist, and he solemnly promises to go with them.

If he can be taken beyond the reach of her spell, and in the excitement of the chase be able to forget her witchery, I believe we may yet save him. As I look upon the young man I realize that he is worth saving no matter to what extremes we are pushed. Finally, we make a start for the Palmer.

Nearing the great brown caravansary that looms up over State street, I go ahead to survey the ground, while Lord Arthur takes his friends in at the ladies' entrance.

Not seeing anything of the enemy around the office, I conclude they are in at supper. So Robert comes in and registers for himself and sister under fictitious names. They go at once to their rooms.

I remain to speak with the English gentleman a few minutes, thanking him for his kind assistance. He declares it is nothing; that he would do ten times that much for Robert Hammond, one of the best fellows that ever drew breath.

Then he mentions Robert's sister, comparing her with the gay butterfly who has beguiled himself and Robert in the past. I can easily see that my lord is struck with her manner, which is so dignified and lady-like. Well, that seems to be my luck, always. What chance would I have, entering the lists against a real lord? I sincerely wish him luck, and believe that if he wins Therese Hammond he will never have cause to regret it.

Arranging some method with my lord, so that I may find him, should I want him, we finally separate. I am anxious to see my employer again and let him know what has taken place.

When matters are going on in this way it does not do to let the iron get cold—strike while it is hot has always been our method.

We discuss the case in all its bearings and then decide on the next move.

An interview must be had with the people against whom we are arranging our batteries. I seek Billings, and find him on guard, as usual, watching the stairs and the elevator.

His manner makes me think of the typical British bull-dog, a faithful servant.

When he learns that I am about to represent him above, and make an effort to have the swindlers disgorge, his joy is great. Eagerly, he tells me exactly the nature of the papers which the Reilly woman and her aristocratic-looking pa have carried off.

With his best wishes for my success I post off to beard the lion in his den.

It has been an easy matter for me to find out the number of the suite Larz Andrews and his lovely daughter occupy, and presently I find myself before the door.

Listening, I think I hear voices beyond, but it would be utterly out of the question to distinguish any words, so I do not try.

I knock.

The voices cease.

Some one comes to the door, and as it opens, I find myself face to face with Evangeline.

Those lustrous eyes meet my own and I experience a trifle of the tremor that comes upon one when under fire. As a soldier, I have felt that same sensation in battle. Bravely I bear up under it,

however; she must not make a fool of Duncan Craig.

"Is Colonel Andrews in?" I ask.

She replies in the affirmative, at the same time looking at me closely.

"I would like to see him."

Stepping back, she calls his name. I hear a man's tread, and presently the valiant colonel stands before me.

He eyes me fiercely, as becomes an officer of her majesty's service, but somehow I do not seem to quail worth a cent.

"How are you, Sherwood?"

This is the name by which he was known on the other side of the big pond. At mention of it he starts and looks confused, but speedily recovers his remarkable nerve.

"You have made a mistake sir. My name is Andrews—a colonel in her majesty's foot."

Really he is a fine-looking man, and I do not wonder that these two, working in common, have been able to deceive so many good folks over on the other side.

"That's all right, Burke," I continue, using the man's genuine name.

"See here, who are you?" he blurts out, this last shot having struck home.

"Sergeant Billings, of Scotland Yard."

"What do you want here?"

"A quiet little talk with you, sir."

He stands there as if puzzled what to do, and meanwhile the girl, who has heard all that we have said, glides up to whisper something.

"Let him come in," I hear her say, "we must hear what he knows."

She is a sharp one, sure enough, and the doughty colonel realizes it, for he flashes a look of admiration upon her.

Then he turns to me.

"Enter," he says, gruffly.

In another moment I have seated myself upon an elegant chair in the apartment. I fancy I see a door connecting with another room move a trifle, but pay little attention to the fact, as my attention is wholly occupied in watching the two people before me.

CHAPTER XVII.

"SILENCE, ON YOUR LIFE!"

There can be no doubt but that the adventurer is curious to know what I am up to. Of course he can give a general guess that it concerns the documents belonging to Trevellion; but he cannot imagine what power I have to make him disgorge.

Before long he will understand the matter better. I have something in my mind to open his eyes, and he will realize that his position is not as safe as he believes.

"Now, Mr. Billings—I think you said that was your name—kindly let me know to what cause I am indebted for this singular intrusion."

He carries it out well. Somehow I admire a shrewd rogue. When a man gives me trouble and all of my energies are needed to get him in a corner, I cannot help feeling a certain admiration for him.

This fellow is certainly the prince of rogues, and I am delighted at the task before me. As for the charming listener, hovering over the handsome swindler, her presence simply adds a zest to the game.

"You have a packet of papers in your possession, colonel—either you or this lady here—belonging to a certain English gentleman. I have come for them," I say, coolly.

With that he laughs hoarsely.

"Bless my soul, you are a brave one to be sent out

into this wilderness. It is a wonder you were allowed to pass New York. The bunco men are on the lookout for such chaps."

I disregard his sneering tone, for knowing what I do I can afford to. The laugh will be on the other side presently.

"You admit that you have the papers, then?" I ask, gravely.

"We admit having done no wrong—this lady, my daughter, is the legal wife of the gentleman you represent, and being such, cannot be disturbed in the possession of the papers."

He evidently imagines that he has a dead sure thing of it, and yet I detect a shadow of uneasiness upon his face, while he watches me as a hawk might its enemy.

"I have come for those papers, sir, and I am determined to have them."

"Really!"

"I understand just as well as you do that the law will protect a wife in the possession of certain property, as it looks upon a married couple as an individual. Hence, I am here to make terms with you."

"Terms?"

The two exchange glances. Perhaps they imagine I am about to offer a fabulous sum in the name of the Trevellion family, for the return of the documents, and possibly a release for Lord Arthur. At any rate I am certain they do not imagine the nature of the proposition about to be advanced.

"Would you like to hear them?" I ask.

"Oh, suit yourself, sergeant. We are not at all particular about giving up the papers. Indeed, I believe my daughter has conceived quite a fancy

for them. It would have to be a large sum that would induce her to relinquish them."

"I said nothing about any sum, sir."

"You spoke of terms."

"Yes, but my meaning is something you do not appear to have grasped. My terms are an even exchange. You hand me over the papers, and I promise that Sergeant Billings will remain as silent as the grave."

"Bah! silence cannot buy us."

"But a word may hang you."

At my words the adventurer turns pale and grasps the arm of his chair. This only lasts for a few seconds and then Richard is himself again.

"Are you crazy, man?"

"Well, I have no reason to believe so. Indeed, just at present my mind is unusually clear, and I would like nothing better than a little engagement with the New York bunco men of whom you speak so highly. In their absence I shall have to content myself with less important game, and confine my attention to you."

His uneasiness grows apace, as he begins to comprehend that all this smoke must mean a fire somewhere. Now he is anxious to discover the conflagration in order that he may gauge the danger.

"You speak in riddles, sir."

"Then I will do so no longer. I chance to possess a secret of yours, which I believe balances the value of the papers—that is, if you place any specific price upon your neck."

"What is this secret, man?"

"It concerns a young man by the name of Robert Hammond."

Andrews' lips pucker up as though he would

mutter something, but no sound comes forth. The girl, however, gives a low cry, and darting a swift glance in that quarter, I can see that her face has suddenly grown very pale. Conscience is at work—not that such a heartless creature regrets her course through any sorrow for the young man, but because the awful consequences of her crime begin to rise up before her.

I feel no sorrow for her. She has taken keen pleasure in making others suffer in the past, and it is only fair that she should be made to feel the torture in turn.

"What of Robert Hammond?" he asks.

"There is a law in this country that punishes for bigamy. This girl here is still the wife of Lord Arthur Trevellion, yet she has dared marry Robert Hammond."

"Those are wild words—you cannot prove them," he declares, hardly knowing what to say.

"They are the truth."

"Well, then she can renounce the affair across the water. You remember that such power is given to her—it is what his relatives have been begging her to do all the while—to declare there was no marriage, as she was already a wife."

Andrews gets deeper in the mire.

"If it becomes a necessity, man, perhaps we can prove that this was the case at the time of the ceremony with Lord Arthur, and that therefore, it was void—that the incumbrance died later on, and she was free to wed at the time she became Mrs. Hammond. How would that strike your bigamy charge?"

"If you can prove all that, my charge falls to the ground. On the other hand it gives her no right to

retain the papers, which I demand that she hand over to me, as the properly authorized agent for his lordship."

He opens his eyes wide.

"Pray, what papers do you refer to? We have confessed to holding none."

Of course I see that he has entered upon a new tack. I am not a lawyer, but I can easily guess what he is playing for.

Between the two stools he may fall.

"Burke, you fence well, but I have a weapon that will down you. Those papers must come into my possession one way or another. Do you know where Robert Hammond is now?"

With that I look straight into his eyes.

My main object is to cause these two alarm, and make them fly from the country—after disgorging the papers. In this way it is probable they will give Robert no more trouble in the future.

In order to accomplish this it is my intention to play my last card.

Andrews quails beneath my accusing look—his guilty heart almost stands still with sudden alarm, and I can see him catch his breath.

"No—yes—that is, what does it concern you anyhow?" he grates between his teeth.

"Much, my dear sir."

I take out the evening *News*, having marked the account of the mystery of the Vestibule Limited.

"You have seen this?" I ask.

He glances at it and shudders.

"I have."

"It states that Robert is dead!"

The girl covers her face with her hands and

begins to sob; somehow the sound arouses my ire, and I turn upon her fiercely.

"Cease that mockery. Remember, I know all your past and understand that this man is but another of your victims," I exclaim.

She removes her hands from her face and looks at me in wonder. Probably she is not accustomed to being spoken to in such a harsh way; but I forget her beauty in remembering her accursed work. The alligator tears hang upon her long lashes, and she makes a dused pretty picture. Neither of the young men would have stood out against it; but I am a hardened old bachelor, and I steel my heart.

"What if Robert is dead—then my daughter is his widow. She will succeed to his estate, for his will leaves it to her, and it is so worded that even if the marriage were declared null and void, the will must hold."

Andrews says this doggedly, as though he has reached his last line of defense, where he must stand at bay.

"You know what caused his death?"

"Certainly—arsenic in liquid form—so the doctor said."

"Where did he get it?"

"Bought it in New York, himself."

"How do you know this?"

"That is none of your business. I do know it, and can prove it."

"The prescription he handed to the druggist was given to him by yonder lady. In the car she also handed him the small vial found empty upon his person, but which at the time was filled with the poison, telling him it was a sleeping potion."

At these words the girl sinks into a chair—she

weakens for the moment. Andrews glares at me as though inclined to make a sudden leap at my throat. Should he attempt such a course, I am afraid the respectable Palmer House will soon witness a scene of wild commotion, for I do not allow any living man to meddle with my breathing apparatus.

He thinks better of it and refrains.

"What you insinuate, sir, is a serious charge, and you would do well to hesitate before you hint at such a thing in public," he says, with assumed calmness.

"It all depends upon you, Burke, whether this charge is pushed to the end. Unless you hand me the papers I came for, I will certainly put my hand in your game here and break it all up. You have your choice—I will not make the offer again—give me the papers, and Sergeant Billings will never betray you—refuse, and there is trouble ahead."

I have him now.

When he comes to deliberate, and sees the only choice there is open to him, I am sure he will not be long in settling the matter. "Give me time to think. I am all broken up."

As he speaks he retires to the other end of the room. The girl follows him, and speaks in low, earnest tones.

I imagine she is trying to induce him to give the papers up, but he is obstinate. He shakes his head in a negative way, and looks ugly.

I complacently await their decision, knowing what my power is. Fume and fret as he will, Andrews must finally come to my terms, for there is no alternative.

I hear him say something in an unknown tongue,

and wonder why he is scolding the girl, or giving her orders.

Then the truth is suddenly brought home to me in rather an unpleasant manner, when an arm steals past me and something cold, which I know to be the steel muzzle of a revolver, presses against my temple, while a voice hisses in my ear:

"Silence, on your life!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"SIR, YOU ARE A WIZARD!"

I cannot help the cold shiver from passing through my frame as I realize the situation; but I keep my wits about me, and maintain my presence of mind, as becomes a man who has been concerned in many a serious business before now.

Andrews jumps up from his chair and comes toward me. Upon his face is a look of fury that gives him the appearance of a fiend. This man would hesitate at nothing in order to accomplish his purpose. Still, I do not fear him or his power—I know my own too well. If everything else fails I can let him know Robert still lives.

Turning my head a trifle, I see who it is holding a weapon against my temple.

Samuels!

The Jewish doctor has been in the adjoining apartment during our whole interview, and the loud words of Andrews probably gave him his order to cover me in this way. I remember now the movement of the door.

"Ah! how are you, doctor?" I remark.

He does not reply, but wags his long gray beard vindictively, and presses the cold barrel of the revolver against my temple even more harshly than before.

"You do not seem to remember me, either of you, and yet I came here in the same car with both. I was the Quaker."

Andrews swears at this.

"I remember he was much interested in the case. Well, you cur from Scotland Yard, you have gotten yourself in a pretty scrape. I suppose you are prepared to die," he says.

The girl even frowns at me—I imagine she is angry more because I scolded her than on any other account. That is woman-like.

Thus beset by enemies, Duncan Craig feels quite easy regarding his safety. They dare not attempt his life, however much they may threaten him.

"A man in my line of business, Burke, knows that he takes his life in his hand whenever he enters upon a game of this sort; nevertheless, I have not the remotest idea of dying just now."

"Well, you're nearer to it than ever before in your life, man. In no other way can I secure myself. There will be some excuse for the deed. I will swear that you followed my child here—that you basely insulted her—she will scream out before I fire, and I—they will look upon me as a hero because I have dared defend my daughter."

He snatches the revolver from the hand of the old doctor. I can see a devilish light in his eyes. There is really no telling what a man may do on the spur of the moment. It is quite possible he will regret the deed as soon as it is done, but such remorse will not collect my scattered brains.

It is high time I played a trump card.

"Andrews!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Do you see my hands—they rest upon my knees, and can do you no harm. I give no evidence of calling out. Do not put a noose around your neck by being hasty."

"What have you to say?" moodily.

"A number of things, to you. In the first place, I assure you that if such a crazy act takes place here as you contemplate, you will be hung for it."

"I am willing to take the risk."

"You do not understand. I am not alone in this matter, Burke."

"Eh?" he ejaculates, in surprise.

"There is another interested with me—the old violinist of the sleeping-car. He, too, is a detective, and chasing you. While I am up here in your room he awaits below. If I do not appear within a certain time he will take a paper I have given him to the chief of the Chicago police, and long before morning the whole clique of you will be behind the bars."

That is my right bower.

I believe it a heavy enough card to win the game, but even in an emergency I can play the joker—which means the disclosure of Robert being alive.

Andrews no longer aims the revolver at me. His enthusiasm seems to have experienced something of a set back. My quiet argument has convinced him that it will be indeed profitable to investigate before going ahead.

He has a long head.

At present, surrounded with difficulties as he is, he seeks the best escape. Those papers he dislikes to give up very much indeed. I do not know why they are so precious to him, but it is an undoubted fact.

He presses one hand against his head as though to direct his thoughts, which in truth must be in a mad whirl.

Evangeline watches him with fear in her eyes.

Perhaps she realizes now the awful nature of the crime in which they have been engaged. Still I do not pity her. It may teach her a lesson, and besides, up to now the suffering has all been on the other side. It is only fair she should share it.

"Is what you tell me true, man?" asks the doughty colonel, gloomily.

"Every word of it. There is no help for it—you must accept my terms."

"Tell me again what you propose."

"My terms? Certainly. You hand me the papers, and I guarantee that none of you will be suspected of having had anything to do with the death of Robert Hammond."

"Have you power to do this?" suspiciously.

"Yes, I can promise you immunity from the consequences of that affair. As I stated before, the facts are known only to myself. I shall destroy that paper, go away, and no one will ever be the wiser for it."

"Will you swear to do this?" he asks, eagerly.

I readily understand the position Andrews finds himself in. He may not fully believe that I can do as I say; but with him just now it is indeed Hobson's choice. There is no other way than of accepting.

"I give you my solemn word of honor that if you do as I say you will not be molested on account of Robert's death. I will go away, and leave you in peace," I remark.

The man seems torn with conflicting emotions. At one moment he almost grovels at my feet, and the next he glares at me in such a savage manner that I actually fear for my life, and wonder if it may not be possible that he has a touch of insanity

within his mind, that may force him to do a deed which he will speedily repent.

What is wisest in his composition finally triumphs, and he puts the weapon on a table.

"Billings, you have won. Remember, though, I would not give up these papers only that circumstances place me in a tight hole. I am determined to carry out later plans, and in order to do so successfully, I must buy you off."

He turns and speaks to Evangeline, who retires to the other room, speedily reappearing, and bearing in her hand a small packet of papers. These she mournfully hands to her father. Evidently the girl is as much mortified as he over the ill success of their plans.

"Now, Billings, here are the papers. Against them I have only your word of honor. I hate to take it but I must, as there is no other way. Tell me again you will make sure that suspicion is not cast upon us on account of the untimely death of that poor young man."

I do so readily, and make my promise as solemn as possible. It is no rash one. How can they be held responsible for Robert's death, when he is alive and in good health, occupying a room in the same hotel as themselves."

The deception is done purposely of course, on my part—all kinds of stratagems are necessary in order to mislead these artful plotters of evil, for the end justifies the means.

It is their gulity fears that magnify the danger hovering over them.

They have plotted to take Robert's life, and from the manner in which things come to pass it is

natural that they should believe success came to their undertaking.

Hence these wild fears.

Andrews is assured as well as he can be, that the matter will be kept quiet, and hands me over the papers.

These I clutch eagerly, for the sake of Billings and Lord Arthur.

I have committed myself to nothing, as it has not been my intention to make out a case against these people on account of Robert's death, for he lives. I do mean, however, to make an attempt to drive them from the country by means of the lever which I grasp. When I tell them that Robert is alive and bent upon vengeance—that he is endeavoring by every means in his power to overwhelm them, and intends to have them brought up with a round turn on account of the attempt on his life, no doubt they will be only too glad to start for California, and from thence emigrate to some other country where the charms of Evangeline may reap a harvest. The world is full of fools, gifted with wealth, and this state of affairs is more pregnant among the nobles of Europe than elsewhere.

I will look these over in my room, Burke, and if they are all right, you can make sure there will be no trouble come to you on account of Robert Hammond's suicide."

With that, I gravely shake the hand of each one in turn, saying good-by. It is a singular thing for an Englishman to do, but we take after the Germans once in a while.

When I come to Evangeline I am conscious of a strange thrill as her small hand touches mine. It seems to run up my arm and over to my heart like

a shock of electricity. I feel her eyes upon me—Jove! what a queer sensation they give a fellow. No longer do I blame Robert and the English lord for being her slaves—by a subtle witchery she can subdue almost any man. I hastily press her hand and drop it with something of a shudder. As I turn and leave the room it is all I can do to keep my eyes from answering the magnetic look she gives me. Is the girl trying her power on me? Well, for once she has run across a hard subject; and yet I have realized her wonderful charms.

As I retreat from the room in some little confusion, I am saying to myself, that had this girl lived in the early days of New England, she must surely have been burned at the stake as a witch.

Never mind, victory has come to me, and I rejoice for the sake of my friends.

I have brought the proof of it with me, and can show them how an American detective works his case. Of course I mean to cast no reflections upon Billings, for in my time I too have followed a party pretty much around the world, endeavoring to secure something he held, only in my case it was a secret the man had to give up, and nothing tangible, that could be taken.

My next move is to see the detective from over the water. I know where he is apt to be found, and seek him below.

Just as I expect, the man is watching the stairs and the elevator. He does not notice, or at least recognize me as I descend.

"Billings, come with me," I say, gently.

"Ah! Mr. Craig, how goes the game?" he asks, eagerly, following me to the reading-room, where we find a vacant corner and sit down.

"It is working along smoothly. By the way tell me what you think of my find."

So saying, I drop the packet before him. He looks at the first paper, an expression of astonishment sweeps over his face—eagerly he scans the others, his eyes almost bulging from their sockets.

"Sir, you are a wizard!" he finally gasps.

CHAPTER XIX.

ONCE MORE TO THE BREACH.

I laugh coolly and knock the ashes from the cigar I have lighted since coming from the handsome apartments of the Andrews.

"A conjurer, eh, Billings? Well, I thought you would be pleased to have those papers, and so I secured them."

"Did you find them, really?" he asks.

"They were handed to me by Andrews, alias Burke, who took them from the hand of his charming daughter."

"Confusion! You really mean to tell me you have been with them and forced them to hand over these papers which they value so highly?"

"Exactly, comrade."

"Why did you do this?"

Billings is puzzled, you see—he has been almost overwhelmed by having the papers put in his hands, and cannot for the life of him understand the motive that has influenced me.

"There were several reasons, sergeant. In the first place, it suited my fancy to do it. Then again those papers were apt to bother us in our side of the case—so long as they held them they would feel in a measure independent to defy us. Last of all, I wanted to show both you and Lord Arthur that I am not ungrateful for what assistance has been given and promised me in this matter."

A peculiar look passes over Billing's face. Strange, but I seem to comprehend it at once.

"See here, my friend, I want you to understand one thing. Those papers are yours, and no one shall know how they came into your possession. I want none of the credit."

He grasps my hand earnestly.

"Ah! Craig, you are a noble fellow. There is nothing under the sun I wouldn't do for you. After the great hunt I have made for these papers, I would have been ashamed to tell Lord Arthur they had been secured by another. You understand?"

"Certainly. Circumstances threw the chance in my way, and I seized it. You could have done the same, Billings."

"What was the lever you used?"

"I demanded the papers on condition that I maintained silence regarding the real cause of Robert Hammond's death."

The sergeant sees the point and laughs.

"Of course you can keep your promise?"

"I went further and guaranteed that they should not be suspected with having anything to do with the young New Yorker's demise."

Billings laughs aloud.

He is in a jolly frame of mind just now, and even a small joke is like touching a match to a magazine —an explosion must follow.

As he desires to hear the story I give it to him briefly. He is pleased to know that I personated him in the transaction, as it will give him prestige with Lord Arthur, should it eventually reach that gentleman's ears.

Billings is the most grateful man I have ever

seen. He stands ready to do almost anything in order to help me.

"First of all, kindly glance over the papers and tell me if they are all there, Billings. Should a single one be missing, tell me what it is, and I will again beard the lion in his den, and demand the lost document on pain of immediate exposure."

The foreign detective draws out a memorandum-book, and compares some notes in it with the file of papers, finally nodding his head with considerable satisfaction.

"All here, Mr. Craig, thanks to you?" he says, warmly.

"Then we'll consider that book closed for all time, sergeant. My lord will have no trouble in getting his marriage annulled now."

"Oh! no. This will please them all, I know."

My work is not yet done.

Robert must be protected against these harpies at whatever cost.

I am afraid lest fate may take a hand in the game and give us another whirl before allowing victory to come.

What if Robert and the girl should meet by chance in the corridor of the hotel—would he be able to resist her witchery? In spite of all he knows about Evangeline, I am inclined to believe the man would surrender. He is not yet strong enough to hold her aloof.

I have endeavored in every way possible to prevent such a meeting, and do not think it will occur, but the thought flashes athwart the horizon of my mind, and sinks out of sight, though it may rise again.

When I have a case of this kind on the stocks I

believe in hammering away at it. Strike while the iron is hot—those who work at forge and anvil have to keep this in mind, and I believe it is a good motto for any one.

Hence, I see no reason why I should not hasten this thing on to a conclusion. The sooner Andrews and his daughter have departed from Chicago, the better for Robert.

This time when I see the man I mean to be prepared for him. I don't like the idea of having a revolver pressed against the base of my skull, and realize that I am in the hands of desperate men. They will find that Duncan Craig can play at that game as well as others with whom he comes in contact.

While I talk with Billings my thoughts are flying and a shape being given to the future plans, by means of which I expect to overcome the difficulties in my way, and reach success.

I bid Billings to seek Lord Arthur and let him know what has been done. They are to hold themselves in readiness in the room adjoining those taken by Andrews—and which, as it happens, one of Trevellion's friends occupies—ready to come to my assistance if necessary.

There can be no doubt but that I have an exceedingly lively job before me. Andrews will be furious when he learns how I have tricked him with reference to Robert. In order to gain my end I shall be forced to reveal all, and lifting the vail, allow him to see what a fool he has been to give me the precious papers for Lord Arthur, before finding out all the particulars concerning Robert.

He is a shrewd man, but conscience makes fools

of us all, they say, and it certainly has of Larz Andrews upon this occasion.

I muse upon the strange life this man has led—what a story it would make if written up in novel form. And the adventuress, too—I can compare her to none, even the Becky Sharpe of Thackeray fades into insignificance beside this wonderful creature—Becky had to depend wholly upon her wits, whereas Evangeline has a beauty besides that charms the hearts of men clean out of their bodies.

What I have read about them in the clippings Billings gave me, has aroused the keenest interest in the pair of swindlers; and I firmly believe this country will owe Duncan Craig a heavy debt of gratitude if he can persuade the couple to emigrate to some foreign strand.

For Robert's sake I mean to do so, and not from any imaginary philanthropical motive.

It is still early.

There remains plenty of time to accomplish wonders in the way of diplomacy. Given half an hour's talk with Andrews, and I believe I can thoroughly convince the man it is decidedly to his interest to do just as I command.

If things go as I intend they shall, the morrow will witness quite an exodus from the Palmer, at least of our party. Andrews and his clique will speed away, bound for California, Robert accompany the three Englishmen to the North-west, bound on a two months' hunt, while Billings, Acton, and myself strike out for New York, the former to cross the ocean.

Will these plans come out all right?

A little time will tell that. Meanwhile I am determined to make it the effort of my life. Success

means a good deal to me, for I have no doubt the pay will be heavy; but it is something more than this that spurs me on. I have become deeply interested, and to myself have sworn that the handsome adventuress must not succeed in holding her latest victim.

The battle is on.

Who will win?

Before proceeding to Andrews' apartments again, I make my way to where I have agreed to meet Colonel Acton. He is on hand, and pleased with my report. Of course I bind him to secrecy, not desiring Lord Arthur to know that it is I to whom he is indebted for the papers.

Then I tell him how I intend to wind the affair up, and receive several suggestions with pleasure. I have always found his hints valuable, and determine to profit by them on the present occasion.

He asks me what share he may have in the work, and I can think of nothing better than that he join the Englishmen in their room next to the apartments of Andrews, and await further developments.

Possibly the ingenuity of the colonel can devise some means of seeing what takes place there; but upon this point I am not particular if he will only keep his ears open for the signal I am about to utter when I desire their presence.

To this he promises his attention, and I am satisfied all will be well.

Before the night passes by, there may be quite a scene in that portion of the Palmer House, creating as much excitement, perhaps, as on the occasion when a bolt of lightning shattered the flagstaff and alarmed the guests.

"You are armed, Duncan?" asks the colonel, and I can see he is a little anxious.

I look at my revolver.

It is in good working order, and I am quite ready to risk my life if need be on it. Before now it has served me more than once on a pinch, and believe I cannot find a more faithful friend.

"All right, my boy. Remember, if they get you in a hole, give the whistle, and we'll run in to close the affair at once."

I readily promise.

It is easy to do this, and yet I find myself hoping circumstances will not make it actually necessary. What I desire is to see the adventurer come down gracefully, admit I have beaten him in the game of wits, and promise to clear out.

Then my victory will be complete.

It is within sight, too, unless, as I said before, that unmerciful jade, Fortune, steps in to ruin it all.

A little patience, some hard work, and lo, the result must be in our grasp.

So I prepare to seek the apartments of Larz Andrews, and tempt my fate again. In the former instance my boldness carried me through, and I believe I have the same characteristic still.

When I leave Colonel Acton it is just nine o'clock, and with a laugh I tell him that ere an hour has passed by I shall have the promise of the alarmed adventurer to shake the dust of Chicago from his feet and depart for the Pacific coast.

"If he says he must have money, tell him you will buy them two tickets to 'Frisco and place a hundred dollars in his hands for incidental expenses; but if ever they show up again on this side of the Rockies, or make any attempt to communicate with Robert,

we will pursue this charge of conspiracy with intent to murder to the end."

These are the colonel's last words, and I find they coincide with my views exactly. We are generally of one mind with regard to matters of importance, and this in a measure accounts for the success attending our efforts in the past.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WORM TURNS.

Without any trouble I find my way to the apartments of Andrews. Once there I knock firmly on the door.

It opens.

"What! you, again!" exclaims the man, for the adventurer himself has answered my rap.

I immediately enter, without awaiting the ceremony of being asked. The nature of my present visit is such that a bold front is necessary to carry me through. Andrews must understand that he is dealing with a man who will not be trifled with.

As I enter the room I glance around.

The Jewish doctor is still present, seated at the table, and the presence of a bottle and glasses suggests the idea that they have been talking about their plans over their liquor.

Evangeline is not in sight.

Coolly, I select my chair and throw a leg across it, resting my arms upon the back. This time I have been exceedingly careful to place myself so that there shall be no chance for any one to slip up behind and cover me. One experience of that kind has been enough.

Andrews is surveying me in wonder. The gray-bearded Jew scowls. Between them they do not present a very inviting appearance; but it is no more than I have expected.

"Well, what do you want now?" demands the adventurer, his voice husky either with emotion or the effect of numerous potations.

"Where is your daughter—I want all to hear what I have to say."

This is the truth, but only a portion of it. I really am anxious to have the whole three of them under my eye, so that it will be utterly impossible to execute a flank movement without my knowledge.

"She is not here. There was a lady at supper whom she knew abroad, and Evangeline has run to her room to have a chat with her."

I am looking directly in Anderws' face while he speaks thus, and have an idea he lies. The girl may not be in the rooms, but I doubt very much whether she has gone on the harmless errand he makes mention of.

One fact I notice.

When I was in here before, her hat lay upon a little side-table—I noticed it particularly, for it was a jaunty affair, with a vail attached. It no longer is in sight.

Why should she wear a hat if only running to another room of the hotel. That is a point that causes me to believe Andrews lies.

Then like lightning I conjecture where the girl can have gone.

There is but one place that strikes me as plausible—she has gone to the hospital to push her inquiries. They have promised to keep the fact of Robert's recovery and departure a dead secret, but I am ready to wager dollars to dollars that even the doctor himself will not be able to hold out against her entreaties.

Well, what of it?

Long ere she comes back, I expect to have disclosed the whole affair. She would have been saved the journey had she but known of my intended visit.

"Be seated, colonel. I have come to give you some information which alters the case, and to make new terms."

My tone is light, but I keep both of the men under my eye, for I do not trust them. When they learn how I have hoodwinked them on the occasion of my previous visit, there will probably be something of a scene, and as I am interested in this affair, it is only proper I should hold myself in readiness to meet the emergency.

They are all attention.

"Gentlemen, it is only fair that I should tell you in the start that when I represented myself to you as Sergeant Billings of Scotland Yard, I deceived you; but I represented that worthy man, who is under this roof at present."

"You are very cool about it, man. What have you done with the papers?" demands Andrews.

"They have been handed over to the keeping of the London officer, who starts East some time tomorrow; so you can consider that case closed. What I desire to talk with you about now, concerns another matter."

Both men frown.

"Wait. A word with you first of all," says Andrews, in a surly tone.

"Well, out with it."

"Do you intend to keep your vow?"

"Will you repeat what it was."

Looking surprised and uneasy he goes on:

"You promised that we would not be brought under suspicion for Robert's death."

"Well?"

"Do you mean to stick to that?"

"I do."

"And you have the power to accomplish it—you can allow the—affair to remain as it is, a mystery?"

"Certainly. You will never be tried for his murder," I reply, confidently.

"Who are you, if not Billings?"

"A New York detective."

"What! Hired by his family?"

I nod in reply.

"But see here—I don't understand. If you are in their employ, it must be to your interest to know the truth."

"I do know it; but it does not put a dollar in my pocket whether I keep the secret or let them know the truth. As I have given you my word on that score I shall keep it."

"Good. You spoke of other business—what does that mean?"

"I said I was here to make new terms with you, Colonel Andrews."

As I speak, I rub my side with my right hand, which then falls on my knee; in this position I have found it easier to get my hand in the side-pocket of my sack coat, and grasp the revolver snugly lying there. The emergency that may require some such sudden move as this is near at hand, and I believe in being prepared.

"Terms—on what basis, sir?" he demands.

"Silence, again."

My answer confuses him.

"You talk in riddles. We are face to face—there

is no one near to hear what you may say. Speak out and tell me what it is you propose to keep silent about."

"Colonel Andrews, your liberty is as dear to you as to most men, I suppose."

"Well?"

"You would look with horror upon a sentence of ten years at Joliet at hard labor."

He shudders and glances at his white hands, that have evidently never known the soil of honest labor. I can well understand the horror such a man feels toward work.

"Yes, I would sooner die than stand such a sentence, and you know it," he mutters.

"I could easily guess it, anyhow. Now, my dear man, you stand a good chance of having such a sentence passed upon you and within a limited space of time."

"Explain—on what charge."

"This mystery of the Limited express."

"The Robert Hammond affair?"

"Yes."

"Ah! but my dear sir, where is your guarantee—of what avail does it become unless it shields me from the consequences of that—accident?"

"Andrews, can you repeat my words?"

"Spoken when you were here before?"

"Yes."

"I think so. Let me see. Once you said 'you may be sure there will be no trouble come to you on account of Robert Hammond's suicide.' "

"Word for word."

"Again you declared, 'I give you my solemn word of honor that if you do as I say, you will not be molested on account of Robert's death.' "

"Colonel, you have a good memory."

"I always had. Did I repeat all you said?"

"I think you covered the ground pretty well," I reply, nonchalantly.

"Then, sir, explain what in the duse you mean, after giving me that assurance, telling me that you come here again on account of the Hammond case."

"Ah! my dear man, it looks like the same thing to you, but in reality there is a distinction with a difference. One case relates to Robert Hammond living—the other to Robert Hammond dead!"

"What?"

"Plainly speaking, Colonel Andrews, when I was here before I deceived you, or rather allowed you to deceive yourself. The afternoon papers did say that Hammond was dead, for you saw the account, but for once the afternoon papers lied."

"Robert—is—alive?"

"Yes, he has been saved miraculously. Your poison failed to do its work—it often does when an over or underdose is taken. Robert is not only alive but back in his senses. He is furious at the deception put upon him and swears to have revenge."

"Malediction!" he grates.

"You may well say that, sir, and if you could see that young hot-head storming for retaliation and revenge, you would tremble."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"You will see for yourself, sir, if you remain in this hotel ten hours longer. He has fallen in with another of your daughter's victims—Lord Trevellion—who is stopping here, and the two are even now planning to have you arrested and sent up.

The proof is overwhelming, and they are sure to succeed."

Andrews' look of alarm passes off.

Doubts begin to flock into his mind.

"Perhaps so. All this sounds very plausible, but there is one thing that puzzles me."

"State it, sir."

"You are a detective?"

"I am."

"You work for money?"

"I am generally paid for my services—it is a business with me."

"Exactly. Now, will you tell me, fellow, what you are to gain by this thing?"

"That is simple enough. I am paid to save Robert from your clutches. It has been accomplished more through a combination of circumstances than any effort of mine. But that is not all. His family is a proud one. I would save them the disgrace attached to a public rehearsal of their troubles. Hence, I am here to make you an offer. If you wait until these two hot-heads perfect their plans, they will overwhelm you. Leave Chicago at once—I will buy you two tickets to San Francisco, and if you ever show yourselves east of the Rockies again, or bring Robert's name in reproach, the indictment held over your heads will surely fall. They punish severely for such an attempt at murder as you have made."

A black scowl convulses his features, and the fire of hate flashes from his eyes.

"And you are the man to whom I owe all this trouble—but for you I would still hold the documents that brings Lord Arthur down on his knees—

had you been out of the game Robert might have died," he says, slowly.

"Yes, I admit I saved his life, and in doing so did you the best turn of all, in preventing you from going to the gallows. Remember that."

"I remember nothing except my wrongs. You are an infernal scoundrel, you police spy. No doubt you laugh in your sleeve at having placed me in a corner, but even a rat at bay will fight; and as for me, here and now I mean to have your life—do you hear, you dog—your life!"

CHAPTER XXI.

AT BAY.

I have no intention of allowing this mad adventurer to accomplish what his words would indicate his purpose to be.

My life is just as valuable to me as that of any man, no matter what his position, and I do not care to have it puffed out simply because a villain whom I have brought to bay in the midst of his wicked schemes chooses to believe that by extinguishing me, he may have a better chance to exist.

On the contrary I feel that if any one has to die it had better be Andrews, since he is a nuisance to the community at large, an excresence on the tree of life.

That is the prime reason why I have come to this meeting armed and equipped, and ready to defend myself to the last.

While Andrews is uttering these wild words he is fumbling in the drawer of a table that stands between us, and from this I understand that the revolver has been hidden there.

I see him clutch something and draw it out, and the mere glimpse I am allowed tells me he has secured the weapon.

With a sudden dextrous sweep of my left hand, I manage to send the revolver out of his grasp. It flies across the room and falls to the floor without exploding.

Andrews sinks back in his chair with a gasp of

surprise. He is incapable of motion for the time being, my sudden action having given him quite a rude shock.

Another actor appears.

The old Jew doctor seems to realize that he has a share in this game, and uttering a confused jumble of exclamations, whether Hebrew, Sanskrit or something else I am unable to say, he springs over to where the fallen weapon lies.

I am ready for all comers by this time, as my own revolver flashes in my hand.

"Hold! touch that on your life, man. Don't you see I'm covering you?" I exclaim.

The Jew turns his head, even as his eager hand is outstretched to grasp the prize, and discovers that I speak the exact truth.

After that he cannot be hired to touch the weapon lying on the floor. Strange as it may seem, life is worth living even to him.

"Come back to your seat," I say, quietly, but there is something in my voice that warns the old man not to refuse.

I am not in a mood to be played with—this business is too serious for that. When property is in danger the man set to guard it must be vigilant, and when evil plotters are scheming even against human life it is right that he should be doubly vigilant.

These two villains would not make much over murdering me, and resting their case upon some plausible excuse that, with the use of gold, and the charming face of Andrews' daughter, might cause a susceptible jury to disagree.

To win the game I comprehend full well what it is necessary for me to do. I must hold them well in

hand, just as an enthusiastic horseman does his trotters when out for a spin. With a tight rein I am their master, since I have a curb-bit in their mouths—if I let them have a slack line then look out for squalls.

My experience in the past has taught me this, and I know how to profit by it.

When the gray-bearded Jew has slunk back to his seat, I have both of them under my eye; but I keep the revolver in sight. There can be no telling how soon I may have to use it, should either or both of the rascals become obstreperous.

Andrews is watching me closely—his breath comes hard, and it reminds me of a hunted animal at last brought to bay.

That is what he is exactly.

"Go on, curse you, fortune is against me. What else have you to say?"

He does not take his defeat gracefully—I am really disappointed in the man, for judging from his debonair manner I have expected that when cornered he would laugh, shrug his shoulders, and declare it was fate. Here he bridles up just like a common, every day rascal, and even wants to take my life.

Well, there certainly is no accounting for tastes, and I have to accept them as they come.

"You might as well take it easy, Andrews. I am in no particular hurry. You cannot avert your fate, and if you are a sensible man you'll listen to reason," I remark.

The fellow realizes that I speak the truth, and makes an effort to recover himself. He knows this childish passion must only get him into new difficulties, and not help his case. I can see his features

working, as he endeavors to get them back into something like their regular appearance, and in this he succeeds to a certain extent.

"Look the matter calmly in the face, colonel, and you will see that I am right. You are in a hole—a desperate position. There is only one way of escape open to you. I hold the door ready to let you all out. The question is do you want to go, or will you drown like so many rats in a trap?"

"All very good, man, but you have ruined my plans that seemed so near fruition," he says.

"They were never so far advanced as you believed. You have been closely followed and your every movement watched. You could not have succeeded in your plans—it was impossible. At any rate, we will not discuss that. You have a chance of getting away if you please."

"Empty-handed."

"Virtually so, but what does that matter? A man of your accomplishments, backed by a daughter so charming, will not long remain out of funds, I am sure."

"You flatter me."

"Not at all. I know you, colonel, and do not underrate your ability. You will have much success in the future, before your downfall. That does not concern me. I am only interested in keeping Robert Hammond away from you, in order to save his family the scandal of knowing that he has been engaged in a shooting scrape in the Palmer House."

He seems to reflect.

"Repeat your terms again."

I do so.

"And these are the only ones you offer?"

"Yes."

"If I refuse to avail myself of them?"

I shrug my shoulders.

"So much the worse for you, colonel."

"But you dare not arrest me."

"Try me and see. Such a course on your part simply means that we have a choice between two evils—we must allow you to annoy the Hammond family, or else go through a public trial and put you where you can do no harm for years to come. Surely, there can be no doubt where we stand. Do not indulge in any false hope that you will escape. Baffled in his mad desire for personal revenge, Robert Hammond will surely push the case against you for all that it is worth.

"As to the amount of evidence—let me enumerate the things against you:

"Your past is known, and through Lord Arthur it can be proven that you attempted this same game upon him, over in England. Then there is the fact of Evangeline marrying again when she claims to already have a legal husband.

"That proves a deep motive in the game. I am able to show that the prescription which Robert presented to the druggist, was written by yonder miserable hound—Samuels. I can also prove and swear that I saw her hand Robert the little vial which Samuels filled from the square bottle that was tossed from the train. Yes, if necessary, I can go back and find that very bottle, for I marked the spot where it fell, and know it was just when we were slowing up to cross a certain bridge.

"As to the deadly nature of the contents of the vial she gave him, I proved that before the terrified eyes of young Hammond.

"The porter had a half-grown Maltese cat in a grape-basket in the smoking compartment. I influenced Robert to allow a few drops of the fluid to trickle down its throat, and the result was that the animal died in a few minutes."

Andrews gives me a startled look.

"Hold on there. Do you mean to tell me that in the face of all this, that man was fool enough to swallow the balance of the—the opiate?"

I smile at his astonishment.

"Not much, colonel. He deliberately emptied all of the poison into the bowl, and washed it down."

"You saw him do this?" eagerly.

I know what manner of straw he grasps for.

"Yes."

"You will swear to it?"

"At any time."

"Then, my dear man, what do you mean by declaring that we attempted to poison young Hammond, and to say we are responsible for his nearly dying at the hospital, when in the same breath you declare he did not take the liquid at all? You have no case."

His spirits rise.

It is the first gleam of hope that has come to the poor wretch for some time—his hands have succeeded in grasping the edge and it is my duty to beat them off again, leaving him floundering in the Pool of Despond.

"It is true, colonel, that Robert's condition was the result of an epileptic fit or something of that nature, to which he is subject; but that does not let you out.

"The proof is overwhelming that you three formed a clique on board the Limited—that you

deliberately plotted to take his life, and would undoubtedly have succeeded had it not been for my watchfulness.

"It does not matter at all, whether you had anything to do with the coma that came upon him during the night—let any jury hear the facts, as we can present them, and you will be surprised to see how fast they will railroad you to prison. We do things in a big hurry over here, Colonel Andrews, when we attempt them at all."

His face drops again.

I have succeeded in taking the wind out of his sails, and his bark loses steerage-way.

"There is no escape?" he mutters.

"None, save over the road to 'Frisco. You should be glad of the chance. Your plans are totally ruined here, and if once that fire-eater Hammond gets hold of you, there will be the duse to pay."

"At any rate, it might be worse."

"Decidedly. I am glad to see you turn philosophical, colonel. It shows you are gradually getting back to your old self again."

"Tell me what you want."

"With pleasure."

"You have ink, pen, and paper here, I suppose?"

"Paper, but nothing else."

"Ah! here is a fountain pen I carry for just such emergencies, colonel. Get the paper."

He does so.

"Now seat yourself at the table."

"You want me to write?"

"I do."

"And commit myself on paper?"

"What I give you to put down will not harm you,

but simply clear Robert. I must have it in the interest of his family."

"I don't see the necessity."

It is not my policy to infuriate him—I do not believe in baiting a chained bear lest he either do mischief to himself or break his chain, and dash at his tormentor.

So I speak quietly.

"There is a necessity, however, on both sides. With you it means liberty—with the people I represent, silence. Do you understand, this paper will never see the light of day unless you talk of the Hammonds, or your daughter attempts to claim that her ridiculous marriage with Robert was genuine."

"You swear to this?"

"I do."

"Then proceed with the funeral. Let me hear what it is you desire me to write."

CHAPTER XXII.

A CRISIS IN OUR FORTUNES.

We make quite a picture, and since that time it has often come up in my mind, causing me to smile.

First, there is the jaunty Andrews—he looks care-worn and anxious now—seated at the table, pen in hand, paper before him, and his eyes cast down as he waits to hear what sort of communication I am about to make. Such a character would attract attention anywhere, for he is a handsome fellow.

Then there is the old Jew, bending forward and listening eagerly, as though he realizes that his fate trembles in the balance, subject to the whim of the adventurer. His long gray beard gives him something of the look of a patriarch. The expression of his face is one of absolute fear, and I shall never forget it. Last of all, the gas-light in that elegant apartment in the Palmer House falls upon myself. I still sit with the back of the chair in front of me, and hold the revolver in my hand, while I watch the two schemers.

"Date your paper, colonel."

"I have done so."

"Then begin. 'I, Colonel Larz Andrews, do declare in writing over my signature, that there was no legal ceremony between Robert Hammond and my daughter Evangeline, and that under the cir-

cumstances they are not and have never been man and wife.'"

He starts in to write, then stops.

"I refuse to put that down."

"Why should you? It is the truth and we can prove it. To do so we must convict your daughter of bigamy—a serious offense in this country as it is in England."

"But you make me convict myself. How am I to tell in what manner you will use this paper. There is another way of reaching the same end without giving me a passport to prison over my own signature."

"I suppose so. Get ready again. Let us see—suppose we put it this way:

"I, Larz Andrews, although acting under the belief at the time that my daughter was free to marry, have discovered since that this was not so, and do now declare in writing over my own signature——'"

"Hold on till I get that,"

The pen scratches for a minute, and then he reads what he has written.

"Continue."

"'That there was no legal ceremony between Robert Hammond and my daughter, known as Evangeline, and that, under the circumstances, they are not and have never been man and wife.'"

He continues to write.

"There. Let me read it out."

He has not missed a word.

"What do you think of it in that shape?" I ask, mentally wondering whether he will sign, for there's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip.

"I don't know that I need object to signing it in

that style, for it drops me down easy. Before I do so, let me understand several things. In the first place what use do you intend making of this document?"

"As I told you before, it is only meant to hold in reserve, in case you are tempted to give the Hammond family trouble at some future time. So long as you remain away from the East, and say nothing about this ugly business, you need have no fear that they will produce this paper."

"So far, good. In the second place, you promised me something."

"Tickets for two to 'Frisco."

"Make it three," with a glance at Samuels, by which I understand their fortunes are united.

I pretend to hesitate, but remember that the hundred dollars extra I am authorized to offer will cover this extra fare.

"Well, call it three first-class tickets from Chicago to San Francisco."

"Done, man."

He bends forward to sign his name, but the Jew, darting forward, whispers something.

"See here, have you anything against Samuels?" asks Andrews.

"Yes, he shall write me a document similar to yours, and sign it. He is in the same boat with you, and must sink or swim. Perhaps a postscript below will answer. Sign, Colonel Andrews, and give place to your confederate, the man who handled the poison."

I smile to see the old sinner cringe under my accusing words. They scorch like a hot iron. He can hardly wait for Andrews to finish, he is so eager to do as I say.

Andrews signs.

I breathe easier when I see him do this, believing I have a firm hold of the reins, and the victory is near.

Something prevents me from seeing the shadow of the advancing cloud.

Samuels takes his place at the table, and, at my dictation, writes out what is really a confession of his share in the contemplated crime, though he does not realize it, and Andrews' thoughts appear to be elsewhere, for as he stands there, his head is bent in a listening attitude.

I, too, have heard voices in the hall outside, but pay little attention to them, my whole energy being devoted just at present to carrying this affair to a successful end.

Once let me get that paper in my possession, and I can defy fate. Such is the thought that flashes through my mind.

Samuels writes.

He is slow at it, forming each letter with the greatest care, as might a schoolboy. I cannot hurry him, impatient as I am to get through with the matter.

Gradually he gets down what I have dictated, and signs his name at the bottom with a grand flourish.

Little does he suspect that in doing so he has made out a pass for himself to visit Joliet, and remain there for ten years, if I should ever take a fancy to use it in the future; but I mean to keep faith with these men, and whether the confession is ever brought into court, depends entirely upon them.

They can invite an attack by rash conduct, while

if they show wisdom there will never be trouble.

I rise to take the paper.

"Wait!" says Andrews, coolly.

Eager as I am to seize the document, I remain quiet to see what he has to say. At the worst, I believe a sudden movement on my part will secure it for me.

"You should keep your promises."

"About the tickets?"

"Exactly."

"Look here, colonel, do you expect me to carry around a ticket agent's outfit? I have no tickets, but I pledge you my word of honor they shall be in your hands by nine A. M. to-morrow."

"Why should I believe you, when you have deceived me before?"

"You are wrong. I promised that you would not be troubled on account of Robert's death, nor have you been."

"Anyhow, you pulled the wool over my eyes," he grumbles, sore at having been beaten.

"Ah! that was all in the game, colonel. Now, you ask what reason have you for believing these tickets will be forthcoming? The best of reasons. It is our earnest desire that you shake the dust of Chicago from your feet as speedily as possible, and our interest causes us to put no obstacle in your way. The sooner you start the better we are pleased. Again, I solemnly promise the three tickets shall be in your hands by nine o'clock, if I have to purchase them myself."

He seems to have some faith in me after all, or else realizes that he cannot hope to do better. At any rate he draws back as though to allow me the privilege of taking the paper.

This I am about to do when I pause.

The voices in the hall have grown louder as though approaching the door. One seems to belong to a female, and it strikes me that I have heard it before—yes, it certainly belongs to Evangeline.

To whom is she talking?

I do not seem to know the voice—possibly it is some friend, or a new acquaintance—but why such excitement—unless my ears deceive me, she is crying while she speaks.

Really, this is all very odd.

Something seems to impel me to listen, even when the precious paper is lying there almost within my grasp.

Even the Jew has started up, and clutching his chair, turns a startled face toward the door. His hearing must be acute if he distinguishes more than I do, but then the man's fears may have something to do with it.

The sounds still draw nearer—they are now almost at the door.

Andrews has turned deadly pale, as I see when I shoot a glance in his direction. He has extended one arm for support, and rests against the wall, his eyes glued upon the door, his ears drinking in the sounds.

Mechanically, I pick up the confession, give it several quick folds, and stow it away in my inside pocket.

If the worst comes, I have this to hold over the heads of the plotters, and it is an instrument that must force obedience.

Somehow, when it has been secured, I seem to breathe easier, just as a man, threatened by a storm, reaches shelter. As yet, even the first sus-

picion of the truth has not flashed into my brain—I only know that there is some impending evil hanging over me, and which must soon break forth.

The truth, when it does come, almost staggers me with its force—to think that such a thing should occur at all, and above everything else, just when I am on the point of arranging matters to bring us the victory.

Thank Heaven, the paper is signed, and I can hold the authors of the document to its provisions. They will not dare go back on it.

The first intimation of the truth that comes to me is when I fully catch the tone of the voice outside—what is it the man cries, in almost despairing tones:

"Evangeline, I cannot, must not go. Take your arms from about my neck, girl. You drive me mad—I worship and yet detest you. Let me go, I say. We can be nothing to each other after this."

"No, no, I will not let you go. You belong to me—I love you so. They told me you were dead—that cruel, wicked man did. Oh! Robert, believe me, trust me. I am your wife!" cries the lovely deceiver.

"No, no!" exclaims Robert, still struggling against her subtle power, but his voice is weak—he cannot long resist with those arms about him, and this charming creature whom he adores, calling herself his wife.

"But I say I am, dispute it who dares. It is all a plot to separate us. They cannot do such a wicked thing. You are mine, and I am yours forever. Come, let us go in and show my father that you live. He will be delighted, for he has taken on so since I told him we were married."

The handle of the door turns—they are about to enter. I resume my position with the back of the chair under my arms, and allow my chin to rest upon one of them. So the door is thrown open, and those who have been excitedly speaking outside in the corridor, enter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CUTTING THE CLAWS OF THE TIGRESS.

Poor Robert!

Of course what I have heard has prepared me in a measure for the scene, and yet I have hardly expected such a sight. No time has been granted me to think over the situation either, and this makes it something of a surprise.

Evangeline enters.

Her lovely face is tear-bedewed, and evidently she has received quite a shock that has started the crocodile-drop factory into play. Some people can cry to order—such ones make good actors, and this girl is an adept. I can easily realize the stunning force of her amazement at meeting Robert face to face in the corridor. She fully believed him dead, and upon thus seeing him, as I afterward learned, believed it was his accusing spirit come back to mock her.

She came very near falling, and seeing the wild expression on her face, and noting her tottering form, Robert sprang forward on the spur of the moment, to prevent such a catastrophe.

It was a wonder she did not betray herself in that one moment of terror. Feeling his arms of flesh and blood about her, a sudden revulsion of feeling overcame her, and she realized that it was Robert in the flesh—that she had been deceived.

Then the enchantress practiced her wiles again—she clasped her beautiful arms around his neck,

she gave him little chance to say a word, but speaking rapidly, and lovingly, slowly but surely dragged him into the net once more.

I cannot blame Robert.

He is bewildered—the old feelings within him temporarily rise up and crush the new desire for revenge—her voice and touch again bind him hand and foot. It is like the runaway slave, tracked by the hounds, treed, and led back once more to captivity. The shackles are on his ankles—he has again succumbed to the enemy.

When I see him entering with his lovely captor, who will not let him go, I am compelled to smile. A thought flashes unbidden into my mind. I remember telling the colonel that Robert's nature has changed—that he is now a fierce vengeance seeker, bent upon paying back the long score.

This, then, is my mad young New Yorker—this desperate fellow, ready to overleap any obstacles in order to have revenge. He comes in with the aspect of a lamb—indeed, in my mind there is something of the whipped-cur look about Robert just now—he hangs his head and seems to be heartily ashamed.

In this fact I take hope that his present infatuation is but temporary, and that he can be easily broken of it.

Again I say, that while I feel sorry for the young fellow, I hardly blame him. The sudden renewal of his former relations with Evangeline, and above all the fact that she has secured a hold upon him, dims his faculties for the moment. He will see again as before, I have no doubt.

After my one glance at Robert, I turn my whole attention upon the girl.

She has entered the room with a proud expression

on her face, as though she feels that she has jus accomplished a great thing.

I have a dim recollection of having read about the old Roman generals coming before Cæsar with the enemies they had captured.

She does not notice me at first, her eyes having fallen upon the colonel, and she moves toward him, still holding on to her victim.

"Father, some one has deceived us—see, here is Robert, my husband, alive and well, only a little confused in his mind. They have put poison into it, but he knows the truth now. Who could have done this, father?"

Her part is well acted, and I hope we are not about to have trouble with Robert. Really, there is no telling what a man will do when thus held under a spell.

Andrews has not forgotten me.

Even the coming of his accomplished daughter, and the fact that she has again succeeded in roping in her almost lost victim, does not appear to dissipate that heavy frown from his face.

Turning partly, he stretches out his arm and points directly at me.

"There is the man who has undone us, girl," he utters, in a deep voice.

Then for the first time, Evangeline notices me.

My presence and peculiarly cool position, with my arms over the back of the chair, strike her with dismay. Perhaps the sight of the weapon which I grasp also tells her that I have been master of the situation before her coming.

She utters an exclamation.

"That man again! We are lost!"

At the same time she mechanically releases her

grasp upon poor Robert, for which I am glad, as her power grows weaker when she fails to thrill him with her magnetic touch—the electric circuit is broken.

I am in no hurry to speak, for I wish to gather my thoughts in order to form a plan of action.

Indeed, in such cases it is wise to let the enemy make the attack and show their hand. Andrews is curious to know what effect this new feature will have upon his fortunes. He forgets certain facts, and I can even see a slight gleam of hope creeping over his features.

Evidently, he has in the past been accustomed to depending a good deal upon this talented daughter, and even now begins to believe she may get them out of the tangle.

It is with Evangeline I must cope.

Andrews himself is not worthy of being called an antagonist, any more than the Jew—true, he counts one when you come to add up the number of those pitted against me, but there is no likelihood of the affair degenerating into a fight now, and he is worth little in a game of wits.

Hence, I count him out in my calculations, and only keep an eye in his direction to see that he does not attempt some treacherous business.

The girl faces me.

She does not shrink from the encounter, and I am really forced to admire her daring. She seems to realize how much there is at stake, though of course not appreciating the whole force of the situation, having been out of the room during the time Andrews and I had our last little engagement.

I can feel her eyes upon me—never have I seen such a pair of eyes since. They seem to burn with

the intensity of their gaze, and yet, thank Heaven, I am invulnerable to their power.

Perhaps they are bent upon me more in anger than with the intention of charming me now. That may account for my power of resistance to a great extent.

"So, you have come back again, after giving your promise—you think no more of breaking your word than I do of snapping my fingers. You are a coward, a wretch too low for my scorn."

It is quite a treat to see her carry on so, but if she expects me to grovel under her taunts, she makes a big mistake. I am not in that line just at present, and besides, I do not feel any withering effect of her scorn.

"Easy, my girl; you are only hurting yourself by such language. It glances from me as though I wore a suit of armor. I am accustomed to dealing with people of your class, and the scorn of rogues and plotting adventurers, who would be murderers only for my care, is daily food to me.

"Suppose you bottle up your heroics now and listen a little to plain reason, as your father, the gallant colonel, has before you."

She eyes me in fine frenzy, and if looks could kill, I am sure I would be slain on the spot.

"You are a wretch to talk to a woman in that way, and if either of these men had the spirit of a mouse, they would give you what you deserve for doing it."

"Fortunately, both of these men understand that I am not to be trifled with, and that I will take summary means of defending myself should the occasion demand it. As for your other charge, I hope I am above insulting any lady, but when you

descend to the role of a criminal, and come within an ace of being a murderess, you cannot expect to be treated with the same consideration your sex would otherwise command.

"Now, suppose we drop all personalities, and proceed to business. Is there anything which you would like to ask me?"

"As I said before, why have you broken your word with us? Is a solemn vow of no importance in your sight, man?"

I glance toward Andrews.

He opens his mouth to speak, but a motion of my hand silences him.

"Evangeline, your question is a foolish one. You do not stop to think. Can you tell me just what my solemn promise was?"

"You gave us assurance that we would not be suspected or troubled about——" here she stops and turns a startled look toward Robert, as the truth rushes over her in overwhelming power causing her face to turn deadly white, and then sending the scarlet tide over cheeks and brow and neck in a great wave.

I finish her uncompleted sentence.

"Robert Hammond's death. Well, neither shall you be. There he stands, in good health bodily, and mentally also I hope, despite your efforts. I shall keep my word, and you shall not be troubled on that score. I gave no other promise."

"No, but you deceived us."

"Ah! indeed. You deceived him, I believe, and he came within an ace of paying for it with his life."

"That has nothing to do with your case, sir. You made us a promise, and all the while knew you

were taking goods without being able to give an equivalent."

How sharply she arraigns me—if she were indeed a true-minded lady instead of being an adventuress, bold and unprincipled, I would cower under her bitter tongue as the criminal does under the Delaware lash. As it is I pay little attention to her words save to admire her splendid acting.

"We will dismiss this, if you please. Whatever I have done, you must remember, was in the interest of justice and humanity. We cannot always choose our methods when dealing with desperate characters, and the fact that I had saved a human life was enough to urge me on. We will now return to business."

"Yes, by the way, what is your business here, Mr. Police Spy?"

Her coolness is amazing, but I know she is wrought up to a tense point, and if the case goes against her, when the climax comes, as I fully believe must be so, she will have a collapse.

"I have concluded it with your father."

"But it concerns me?"

"Unquestionably."

"Then it is only fair that I should hear it."

"You are right, and I see no reason why I should not inform you at once. I have arranged with Colonel Andrews for an exodus."

"What?"

"You three will be provided with tickets to San Francisco, and will leave Chicago to-morrow morning, bound West. If you ever dare to boast of your connection with the Hammond family, so as to bring their name into a scandal, or venture to appear east of the Rocky Mountains again, the ven-

geance of the law will fall. You understand what I mean—what do you say?"

"I refuse to go."

"Ah! I am not surprised—you fail to comprehend the situation, my girl. What do you propose to do about it?"

I desire to draw her out, and my plan succeeds.

She stands up erect and looks me in the eye.

"I propose to remain here in Chicago with my husband, and Robert will defend his wife against any slander you may raise."

"Indeed! I see you force me to extreme measures. I will call in some others near at hand who are interested in this business."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

As I speak, I give a low but distinct whistle, which must certainly be heard by those waiting in the adjoining room.

Sure enough they immediately file in, one after another, and I am surprised and pleased to see Robert's sister Therese among them.

At sight of Lord Arthur, Evangeline starts, and momentarily loses her splendid self-possession, but quickly recovers. It is evident that she has recognized her former victim in spite of the great change in his appearance. His presence bodes her case no good.

The three Englishmen and Colonel Acton range themselves about. One glance I shoot at Andrews and the Jew—both of them look as though wishing the earth would open under their feet and ingulf them.

I realize that nothing need be feared from either of these parties—Evangeline is the one I have to deal with, and whose spirit must be subdued if we wish for victory. She looks as if she might give us trouble yet.

I have my witnesses present, and it is my business to push the accusation home with the least possible delay.

If this girl will not be amenable to reason we must find some other way of reaching her, for Robert shall be saved from her clutches—I am resolved on

that. I know she cares little for the man himself, but the obstacles met in the way have aroused all that is stubborn in her nature, and she will fight for him.

"Now, my girl, when you look upon this gentleman, Lord Trevellion, you understand that we know and Robert knows you are not his wife—that the ceremony was a farce, gone through with for a purpose.

"You succeeded in part—Robert made his will in your favor, and bought the deadly drug that was to take his life.

"I saw you give him that vial on the train, and convinced him of the deadly character of the liquid it contained by killing a Maltese cat with it. He emptied the vial in the basin of the lavatory, and his love for you was turned into detestation and horror.

"When he was found that way, in the morning, all of you thought he had taken the poison, and rejoiced accordingly.

"Even I was puzzled until his sister Therese, who was aboard the car, in a nun's attire, informed me that Robert was subject to these cataleptic states resembling death.

"We concluded to deceive you, and make you believe he had died, so the article was written up for the papers.

"You remember my visit when I saw you before. Sergeant Billings and I had the little matter arranged in order to get the papers for his lordship. That was successful. Then there remained but one thing more, and this was to effect your departure from Chicago.

"I came here to see your father, and advanced

reasons why you should go. They were powerful enough to influence him, and he has given his consent."

Unconquered, still, she faces me with a sneer upon her pretty face.

"Yes, you could frighten him, but let me tell you, sir, I am not one bit alarmed. I intend to stay here and defy you. Robert will stand by me—Robert loves me, do you hear."

"My dear young woman, you shall hear what I have to say. I will tell you just what I did your father. Then you can take your choice—one or the other.

"On one hand I offer you three tickets to San Francisco, where you will be safe.

"If you refuse this the whole three of you will be arrested before morning and placed behind the bars, on the charge of attempted murder.

"You smile incredulously, but remember what I can prove—the prescription calling for this poison, written in Samuels' hand, his filling the little vial in the lavatory of the sleeper, when he thought no one was looking, and tossing the original bottle out at a point where I can find it when necessary, and your handing him that sleeping potion.

"Then remember, also, that here is a gentleman you victimized in the same way over across the water, even attempting his life—his evidence would convict you before any jury.

"Keeping these things in your mind, do you still refuse to give Robert up and go with your father to new fields, where other conquests await you? On one hand, is liberty—on the other, years spent in prison. Now choose."

She does not flinch,

"You may be able to prove all these things and you may not. Perhaps a jury would prefer to believe me in preference—they have a weakness for women, you know. Then again, you would not dare drag the name of Hammond, and that of Trevellion, through a criminal court. I defy you to do your worst."

"You will not go?"

"No. I believe Robert will protect me," flashing a glance at him which fortunately he sees not. Poor Robert stands there, as though he hardly dares to call his soul his own. In later years he will be extremely mortified to remember the position in which fortune has placed him.

"Well, I have something more to tell you, and perhaps that will influence you."

I deliberately take out the document signed by Andrews and the Jew. There is no longer any danger for me, since I have friends at hand, so I replace my weapon.

"Listen while I read this."

Slowly I start in, placing emphasis upon the words I wish to bring out. In this I have a double motive —Robert hears as well as the bold adventuress, and I desire to prime him for the trial near at hand, when he must decide his own fate.

As I read, I glance up occasionally, to note the effect on Evangeline.

She seems about to give way. Deprived of her father's support she finds it harder to stand alone, and unless Robert fails me, I know I have the case won.

At length I conclude with the remarkable contribution of Doctor Samuels, in which he actually in-

criminates himself and all of them, making what might be called a confession.

"Now, you have heard how the case stands. There is nothing left for you to stand on. I insist that your father carry out his agreement, and that all of you leave Chicago before noon to-morrow, for I solemnly swear that if you are found here after that hour, I will be armed with authority to arrest."

She bows her head.

Have I broken her proud spirit? Something like a feeling of compunction passes through my heart—she is a woman, and I can never take the satisfaction in humbling one of her sex that comes to me when I have brought a strong man down on his knees.

But I have made a mistake—Evangeline has one more card to play.

It is the acme of desperation, and I am amazed at her daring.

"Yes," she says, slowly, "you have won."

"You will leave Chicago?"

She nods her head.

"I will accompany my father. His weakness has cost us the game."

"Sensible girl."

"We will obey your orders, sir, since you can be so cruel, but"—raising her head and giving me an electric look—"I shall not go alone!"

"Of course you mean your father——"

"I mean Robert will go with me!"

Her defiant declaration almost takes my breath away, but I dare not show it. I know she means to appeal to him—what if he weakly gives in? Some desperate measure must then be adopted. I notice with pleasure, that Therese has hold of his hand—a

sister's love against the fascination of this charmer!

"You surely are not simple enough to believe Robert would accompany you after learning of all your baseness—that you are really the wife of another until the courts annul the marriage, and that you have pretended to love him in order to get his money?" I cry out, in something of a fury.

"He does not believe you—he knows I love him—we can be married as soon as Lord Arthur secures his divorce," she pants.

I see her dart at Robert's other hand.

"Say you will go with me, Robert, darling!" she cries in a beseeching tone, and he gives her a bewildered look.

"Robert, brother, remember our mother and the honor of our name," pleads Therese, and he turns to look into her calm eyes, now full of unshed tears.

Between the two, what will he do?

I hold my breath.

Silence reigns in the room—a pin dropping could be heard to fall.

Then I hear a low gasp of bitter disappointment as Robert flings the hand of the siren from him, and turning, wraps his sister in his embrace. The tempter has been beaten, thank Heaven, and the young man's future is safe.

Evangeline covers her face with her hands, and sinking into a chair, weeps bitterly. Knowing the tremendous power of a pretty woman's tears, and fearing lest Robert yet repent of his manly decision, I make a signal to Acton, who manages to get brother and sister out of the room.

He soon returns.

We have further talk with those against whom

the edict of banishment has gone fortth. Evangeline loses her temper—she raves and abuses us like any old fish woman in Billingsgate market.

When we have finished our business we leave them. It is decided, however, that a watch shall be kept on the girl—I fear lest she seek to meet Robert again.

It seems, however, that when he threw her hand aside disdainfully, she took it for a final decision—at any rate there is no attempt made to communicate with her late victim.

Armed with the proper funds, I purchase tickets and secure berths in a sleeper, as soon as the railroad offices on Clark street are open.

These I hand to Andrews personally, and have a few last words with him. He informs me that his daughter has recovered in a measure from her keen disappointment, and even looks forward with something of pleasure to seeing new sights on the Pacific slope. At the same time he begs me not to face her, for she hates me as the author of her woes, and the sight of my countenance might throw her back into that fit of mad fury.

I have no desire to talk with her again, but unknown to them, I see them safely away, and wire a friend in 'Frisco to tell me whether the trio arrive there or not, and if so to keep me posted as to their movements.

The last I have heard from them, they were about starting for Australia, Evangeline having charmed a wealthy stock-raiser into marrying her. Perhaps she will mend her ways, but I am very doubtful about it.

Robert has spent a pleasant period with his English friends, and later on they visit him in New

York. I am invited to the private wedding of Lord Arthur and Therese Hammond, and I go because I believe in her as a noble woman. She will make him a good wife. Had I been younger, I would have entered the lists again; but my life work is mapped out, and I shall keep in the harness, thankful that now and then I have an opportunity to do good—to bind up the wounds of the wretched as well as bring rascals to justice.

[THE END.]

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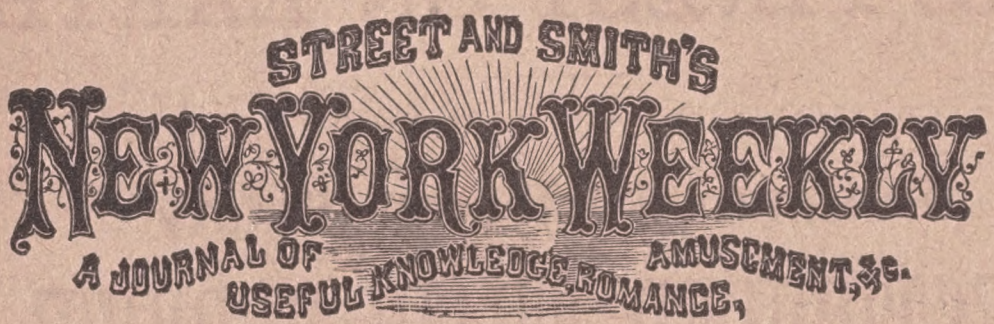

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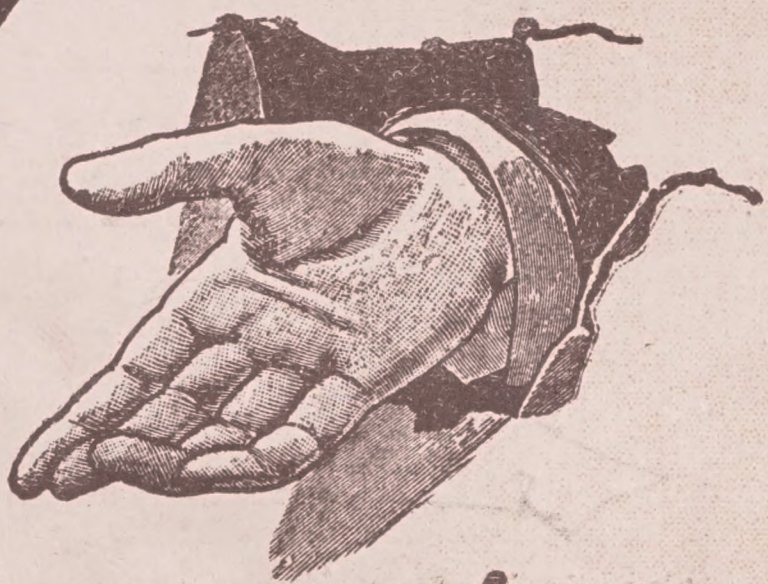

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